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# FROM STEVIN TO SPINOZA

*An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century  
Dutch Republic*

BY

WIEP VAN BUNGE



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Wiep van Bunge (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1997).

Most of my research was made possible by the Netherlands' Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Currently, I am in charge of the NWO-programme *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic: Cartesianism, Spinozism and Empiricism, 1650–1750*. Accordingly, I hope that in the not too distant future, the sequel to this book will be issued, tentatively entitled *From Spinoza to Hemsterhuis*. I am indebted to many colleagues, both at home and abroad. A special word of thanks should go to Henri Krop, Michael and Oriel Petry, and to Gunther Coppens, Eric Jorink, Han van Ruler, Paul Schuurman, Rienk Vermij and Michiel Wielema, but I owe most to Jacky, Merel and Joachim to whom I should like to dedicate this book.

*Rotterdam, August 2000*

## PREFACE

This is not a traditional History of Philosophy. Although this book presents a picture of several schools of thought that are an essential part of early modern philosophy, it neither concentrates on its main authors nor on the key concepts which together made up seventeenth-century philosophical discourse. Instead I have studied philosophy as it appeared in a specific seventeenth-century culture. Hence this book draws on sources which historians of early modern philosophy as a rule tend to neglect, although a substantial part of this book picks up on recent research done by Dutch colleagues. Over the last decade, the early academic reaction to Cartesianism in particular has been dealt with in a score of publications, mainly by Theo Verbeek at Utrecht University. Many of my primary sources, however, deal with the non-academic disputes over Cartesianism and a large part of the polemics involving Spinozism consist of pamphlets and are in the vernacular. For this book deals mainly with debates. It is, I presume, largely a history of the reception of ideas.

It just so happened that in the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century, the classical philosophers Descartes and Spinoza became the subject of hundreds of books and pamphlets, in which both admirers and critics set out to discuss their views in considerable detail. The authors of these texts have now largely been forgotten. It should be added that the overwhelming majority of the participants of these debates were complete amateurs. Only a handful of the protagonists of this study were professional philosophers. Among these were the great Leiden Aristotelian, Franco Burgersdijk, the maverick Groningen professor of philosophy, Martin Schoock, the unruly Leiden 'Cartesian', Adriaan Heereboord and his pupil Johannes de Raey. Like the lawyer and diplomat Grotius, the independent nobleman Descartes and the lense-grinder Spinoza, Simon Stevin, Lambert van Velthuysen, Pieter de la Court, Lodewijk Meyer, Adriaan Koerbagh, Johannes Bredenburg and Balthasar Bekker did not hold academic positions. Many of them preferred to write in Dutch. Much of the literature on these men is in Dutch as well, and concentrates on details. No doubt this has contributed to their present obscurity. Perhaps, an



attempt to present their efforts in a more general essay may help to alter this.

No student of seventeenth-century philosophy needs to be reminded that Aristotelianism, Cartesianism, and Spinozism were important. The question why this should be so, however, yields widely differing answers. Anglo-Saxon scholarship generally seems to embrace the view that dead philosophers are important to the extent that they matter philosophically. That is, they help us to understand the rise of our own philosophical predicament. However, unless I am gravely mistaken, nowadays an increasing number of experts prefers to regard research into the history of philosophy as an autonomous exercise, which needs no philosophical justification. I firmly agree with this view and my own concerns in this book are predominantly historical. In order to come to some sort of understanding of the meaning of philosophy during the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic, I have tried to pay particular attention to the political, religious and scientific contexts in which it was being practiced. The significance of philosophy within these contexts appears to be confirmed by the fact that it actually helped to create them. Aristotelianism became a major theological force, as did Cartesianism which also turned into something of a political movement, and, of course, deeply influenced the scientific culture of the Republic.

This contextual approach to the history of philosophy appears to provide us with the opportunity to assess the emergence and early diffusion of Spinozism as a comprehensive philosophy. Indeed, the chief purpose of this book is to provide an account of the way in which Spinoza should be related to the country in which he was born, and never left. Spinoza is generally considered the greatest philosopher in the history of the Netherlands. As a rule, however, Dutch historians, even experts on the seventeenth-century Republic, shy away from assessing his place in Dutch intellectual history. Many Spinoza-specialists, on the other hand, either stress the uniqueness of his thought, and as a consequence forestall the opportunity to formulate any credible context from which to understand their subject, or prefer to stick to the well-worn clichés regarding the intellectual freedom the 'tolerant' Republic allowed its inhabitants.

The seventeenth-century Dutch Republic is the subject of an awesome amount of scholarly literature. The history of ideas has followed suit, and over the last few years in particular, the monumental clash which took place in the universities of Utrecht and Leiden around the middle of the century between the adherents of Aris-

totelianism and the first followers of Descartes, has been dealt with extensively. In view of the equally flourishing Spinoza-scholarship of recent years, at first sight the history of Dutch seventeenth-century philosophy might look as though it is being well taken care of. However, hardly any attempt has been made so far to address the wider cultural significance of the practice of philosophy in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Because of the wealth of material that is to be dealt with, this book can provide no more than a sketch. I like to think of it as an essay with footnotes. The literature referred to represents a limited selection, inevitably conveying my personal preferences. For every academic there comes a time when he or she has to stop reading and start writing. I feel it is high time to try to take stock of some of the more important results of recent research and attempt the construction of a coherent narrative.

It might be useful to start by studying the period which immediately preceded the emergence of philosophy as a professional enterprise in the Republic. As Paul Dibon showed many years ago, it was not until the 1620s, when the Leiden professor Franco Burgersdijk started to issue a comprehensive series of introductions to the *corpus Aristotelicum*, that philosophy came into its own as a professional discipline at the newly-established universities of the Dutch Republic. As we shall see, the Aristotelian academic establishment, soon to be replaced by Cartesianism, came into being after the outcome of the Dutch Revolt was no longer in doubt. When Cartesianism started to spread, the 'old' philosophy it sought to replace was by no means ancient. As a matter of fact, the main trends constituting the intellectual profile of the emerging Republic, were very much at odds with the Peripatetic inheritance.

However, before we are able to address these issues, it is necessary first to direct our attention to the unlikely beginnings of the Republic, that is to the Dutch Revolt. For after several decades of growing frustrations among the inhabitants of the Low Countries over their financial and religious predicament within the Empire of the Spanish Habsburgs, during the 1560s they embarked on a revolt which would ultimately result in the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This treaty heralded the end of the Eighty Years' War and brought with it the international recognition of the Dutch Republic as a sovereign state. By the middle of the seventeenth century this new nation had become a world power in its own right. Its armies had defeated the largest empire the western world had seen since antiquity. Its fleet ruled the waves. Its merchants would dominate world

trade for more than a century. During the middle of the seventeenth century its cultural life also blossomed into a golden age. But first there was a war to be won.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE HERITAGE OF HUMANISM

#### 1. *Science in Action*

At least until the 1590s the prospects of this emerging nation were decidedly gloomy. ‘Their very existence was war,’ as E.H. Kossmann described the Dutch of the Golden Age: ‘They were cradled in war; their state owed its life to war. It was difficult to see how it could survive without war.’<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that this emerging federation of provinces, swept by the Reformation, small but full of promise, directed by an extremely energetic merchant middle class struggling to liberate itself from an intensely Catholic empire, dominated by a feudal aristocracy, was in urgent need of drastic measures. The speed with which these measures were taken testifies to the resolve of the rebels to come to terms with the challenges they faced. It was only to be expected that the practice of philosophy—which by its very nature in both its Platonic and its Aristotelian varieties was an eminently theoretical pursuit—was in no great demand. This was undoubtedly true of academic life. Certainly until the 1620s, Dutch professors of philosophy only played a marginal role in the curriculum of their universities. Yet the very existence of an academic infrastructure was the direct result of the resolve of the Dutch to take their future into their own hands. Between 1575, when the university of Leiden was inaugurated, until 1648 when even Harderwijk had established an academy, universities were founded at Franeker (1585), Groningen (1614) and Utrecht (1636), in order to supply the Republic with an indigenous professional class of theologians, lawyers and physicians.

First and foremost, however, there was a war to be won. A war which made very particular demands on the engineering skills of the Dutch scientists of the time. Whereas William of Orange does not seem to have had much interest in the purely technical aspects of warfare, his son and successor Maurice as general of the armies of the States General, was constantly calling upon scientists to en-

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<sup>1</sup> Kossmann, ‘In Praise of the Dutch Republic’, 164–165. See also Groenveld, ‘Mars und seine Opfer’.

sure that his armies would benefit as much as possible from their practical genius. In 1593 he appointed Simon Stevin (1548–1620) from Bruges as his personal counsellor. For more than a decade, Stevin served as his private tutor, shortly afterwards being officially appointed quartermaster of the Dutch army. In fact Stevin's most famous work, the *Wisconstige Ghedachtenissen* (Mathematical Thoughts, 1605–1608) consists of five treatises especially written to instruct his princely pupil in the principles of cosmography, geometry, weighing and general accountancy—subjects crucial for efficient campaigning.<sup>2</sup>

Since the Eighty Years' War consisted mainly of a series of sieges—during his thirty-seven year career Maurice captured 38 towns and 45 forts—the principles of fortification acquired a very particular relevance.<sup>3</sup> Ill suited for Dutch soil, the dominant Italian tradition of Renaissance fortification, based on Vitruvius, had to be fundamentally rethought, and Stevin did so brilliantly.<sup>4</sup> The overriding achievement of Stevin was his success in putting his insights into practice. Maurice was desperately in need of such expertise, and ordered Stevin to set up an engineering school in Leiden, closely associated with the university, in which a Dutch class of professional engineers was to be educated, the language of instruction being the vernacular. The leading engineers who from the early 1570s had played such a vital role in the war, had to be complemented by a younger generation which was to be trained professionally. Sadly, we know very little about the background of this first generation of architects and surveyors, who apparently learnt their craft mainly through practice. This tradition of practical learning was continued in the curriculum of the *School voor Nederduytsche Mathematique*, which seems to have included extensive periods of 'training on the spot' with the army.<sup>5</sup>

The first two professors of this school, Ludolph van Ceulen (1548–1610), formerly fencing master at Delft, and Symon Franz. van Merwen (1540–1610), were of course looked down upon by the university professors, if only because they taught in Dutch. When in 1607 Maurice required the senate of the university to confer aca-

<sup>2</sup> Kubbinga, 'Stevin en Maurits'. For a general essay on the natural sciences in the seventeenth-century Republic, see Jorink, *Wetenschap en wereldbeeld*.

<sup>3</sup> Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 6–24; Van Nimwegen, 'Maurits van Nassau and Siege Warfare'. For the army of the Republic, see Zwitter, *De Militie van den Staat*.

<sup>4</sup> Van den Heuvel, 'De Huysbou en de Crychsconst van Simon Stevin'.

<sup>5</sup> Taverne, *In 't land van beloofte*, 61–69 and 75–81; Westra, *Nederlandse ingenieurs en fortificatiewerken*, 82–89.

demic degrees on the graduates of this newly established engineering school, it only agreed on the condition that the examination be presided over not simply by Van Ceulen and Van Merwen, but also by the university professor in mathematics Rudolf Snellius (1546–1613). Once again, we know next to nothing about the early years of this school of engineering. The fact that after their deaths, that is in 1615 both Van Ceulen and Van Merwen were succeeded by Frans van Schooten sr. (1581?–1645), does seem to imply that Stevin's initiative had proved its worth. From the little that we know about the courses in mathematics given in the arts faculty by Van Schooten and Rudolf Snellius' son Willebrord (1580/1581–1626), it looks as though there was close co-operation between the mathematicians of the school of engineering and the university. Willebrord Snellius, for instance, published on such eminently useful and typically 'Batavian' subjects as cartography (*Erasthenes Batavus*, 1617) and navigation (*Typhus Batavus*, 1624).<sup>6</sup>

Stevin's role in the 'construction' of the Republic went even further. Singlehandedly, he more or less invented the Dutch terms to be used in mathematics. In a famous *Uytspraek van de Weerdichheit der Duytsche Tael* (Discourse on the Worth of the Dutch Language, 1586) he proclaimed Dutch to be the best language in the world, particularly suited to deal with mathematics, on account of its large number of monosyllabic words. It is significant that around this time, the Amsterdam rhetorical chamber *De Eglentier* attempted to persuade the senate of Leiden university to adopt the vernacular, a decision for which it was clearly not yet ready.<sup>7</sup> In 1610, however, a number of leading poets who had emigrated from the Southern Netherlands, gratefully dedicated their *Nederduytschen Helicon* to Stevin.<sup>8</sup>

Around the turn of the century, Stevin was only one of many Dutch scientists who were mainly occupied with the practical challenges of the age, and much less so with speculative philosophy. In a short essay *Vant Menghen der Spiegelingh en Daet* (On the Combination of Theory and Practice), Stevin defined his own position as follows: 'The property and the end of theory is that it furnishes a sure foundation for the method of practical operation, in which by closer and more painstaking care one may get as near to the perfection of the theory as the purpose of the matter requires for the benefit of man.'

<sup>6</sup> Van Maanen, *Facets of Seventeenth-Century Mathematics*, 4–18; Westra, *Nederlandse ingenieurs en fortificatiewerken*, 82–89.

<sup>7</sup> Van Dorsten, *Poets, Patrons, and Professors*, 111.

<sup>8</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Simon Stevin*, 298–320; Van der Wal, *De moedertaal centraal*, 79–87.

Theory and practice were to proceed hand in hand, a view which subsequently inspired Stevin to a critique of the one-sided academic practice of the sciences:

These two sections, theory and practice, are so different that many people apply themselves altogether to the one, without being actually acquainted with the other, as is the case with many lecturers and their audiences in the universities, where they constantly study theories, *e.g.* *Euclid's* elements of geometry, without actually measuring lands, ramps or vessels or doing anything else in which practice consists.<sup>9</sup>

While, during the 1590s and 1600s, the armies of the Republic took city after city and became increasingly successful in holding on to the territories they had captured from the Spanish, the merchants whose families during the course of the seventeenth century were to rule this young nation, were starting to lay the foundations of their fortunes. At the close of the sixteenth century, after the fall of Antwerp in 1585, the Dutch Republic harboured, as Jonathan Israel has put it, 'the most prodigious burst of maritime and commercial expansion ever seen in the world until that time',<sup>10</sup> resulting in the Dutch primacy in world trade, which was only to collapse during the course of the eighteenth century. Israel has brilliantly explained this domination in terms of economic and political developments on a global scale, which were altogether beyond the influence of any one party. However, the Dutch were apparently competent enough as sailors to benefit from the opportunities presented by the vicissitudes of the world market.<sup>11</sup>

A second discipline, which apart from fortification and surveying was quick both in absorbing the latest developments in science, and in stimulating further progress, was navigation. We have already mentioned Willebrord Snellius' contribution, and it goes almost without saying that Stevin also published on navigation.<sup>12</sup> Closely linked was of course the widely acclaimed Dutch expertise in cartography. Mercator's *Mappamundi* of 1569 paved the way, and was followed by a host of cartographical innovations, resulting finally in Willem Jansz.

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<sup>9</sup> Stevin, *Principal Works*, III, 618–623, 619. See also Van Berkel, 'Spiegheling en daet bij Stevin en Beeckman'.

<sup>10</sup> Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of some of the specific claims made by Israel in his *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, as to the relative importance of trade with the Baltic, the question when this primacy reached its zenith, and the role of the state in protecting and furthering trade, see Lindblad, 'Foreign Trade of the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century'.

<sup>12</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Simon Stevin*, 175–189.

Blaeu's famous *Tooneel des Aerdrycks* (The Terrestrial Stage, 1634–1635).<sup>13</sup> The stunning achievements of the Dutch fleet need not detain us here. 'Here indeed', as Geoffrey Parker observed, 'was a high-seas fleet capable of operating at long-range, on a permanent basis, as an ocean-going force: it was arguably the first in European history.'<sup>14</sup> Recent research into the Dutch history of the art of navigation has convincingly established that until the 1630s scientists such as Stevin, Metius and Snellius, closely co-operated with the men who actually took to the sea. Together '*theoristen*' en '*practicijns*' presided over committees judging new nautical inventions. It is evident that already in the early years of the seventeenth century the art of navigation had become a science in its own right. Both the East- and West India Companies appointed experts to examine steersmen. From the turn of the century, Amsterdam boasted two nautical schools, and well before 1650, similar institutions were established both in Vlissingen and Middelburg in Zeeland, and in Rotterdam and Hoorn in Holland. Moreover, even without being forced to, many steersmen eagerly adopted such recent inventions as the steering compass and navigation charts. The so-called 'mile of Snellius'—a prime example of practical mathematics enabling steersmen to estimate lengths at sea—was also widely used.<sup>15</sup>

Closely associated to the art of navigation was astronomy—a third instance of the essentially practical orientation of early seventeenth-century science in the Dutch Republic. Simon Stevin may once again serve as an example of the high degree of sophistication this particular discipline had reached in the Netherlands. Stevin, in his *Wisconstighe Ghedachtenissen*, had already come to the conclusion that Copernicanism was indeed superior to Ptolemaic cosmography.<sup>16</sup> It appears to have been the case that before its condemnation by the Catholic church in 1633, Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium* (1543) met with little resistance in the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> Mathematics constituted the core of astronomy, which rose to particular prominence in the Frisian academy of Franeker. Once Adriaan Metius (1571–1635), pupil of Rudolf Snellius, Ludolf van Ceulen, and Tycho Brahe had been appointed professor of mathematics in 1598,

<sup>13</sup> Struik, *The Land of Stevin and Huygens*, 36–45. See more in particular: Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money*.

<sup>14</sup> Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 100–102.

<sup>15</sup> Davids, *Zeewezen en wetenschap*.

<sup>16</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Simon Stevin*, 146–167.

<sup>17</sup> Vermij, 'Het copernicanisme in de Republiek'.



Franeker soon acquired an international reputation. From 1600 until 1635 Metius not only taught mathematics, but also astronomy, fortification, surveying, and navigation.<sup>18</sup> Like Stevin, Metius also published several treatises in Dutch, for the instruction of engineers, surveyors, and steersmen—just as his brilliant pupil, Johannes Phocylides Holwarda (1618–1651) did. A prime example is his *Friesche Sterre-Konst* (Frisian Astronomy, 1652), which was published posthumously. In many ways, this book is typical of the Dutch science of the early seventeenth century, not only in that it is specifically intended for steersmen, but also on account of its emphasis on mathematics as the basis for science in general. One Nicolaus ab Amama wrote a short preface to Holwarda's book, in which he stated bluntly that no one, who did not practise mathematics, could be regarded a philosopher.<sup>19</sup> The Aristotelian 'contempt' for mathematics was ridiculed by Ab Amama, who deemed it 'unchristian' to enslave reason to the authority of Aristotle, Aquinas and Duns Scotus.<sup>20</sup> Leiden, meanwhile, did not lag behind, and in 1633 opened the first academic astronomical observatory in Europe.

The overriding practical concern of these late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century scientists in the Dutch Republic, and the prominent role they attributed to mathematics, were largely the result of the demands put upon the Republic by war and trade. In this sense, Stevin and his colleagues were indeed the first truly *Dutch* scientists, since their efforts reflected a number of highly specific challenges peculiar to the emerging state. Yet from a broader perspective, the close link between *spiegelingh en daet*, reflect a European pattern of late Renaissance humanism, in that, throughout the sixteenth century, the Aristotelian distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge, formulated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, increasingly lost its edge. Juan Luis Vives' *De tradendi disciplines* (1531) had been one of the first tracts to stress the importance of technology for philosophy, a message which would be echoed throughout the century by such first-class scientists as Vesalius (1515–1564) and Gilbert (1540–1603), and was finally incorporated in Bacon's *Great Instauration*. A very particular reason for the gradual erosion of the classical distinction between theory and practice can be found in a development which at least goes back to the early fifteenth centu-

<sup>18</sup> Snelders, 'Alkmaarse natuurwetenschappers'; Terpstra, *Friesche Sterrekonst*, 55–64.

<sup>19</sup> Holwarda, *Friesche Sterre-Konst*, Preface, n.p.

<sup>20</sup> See also Terpstra, *Friesche Sterrekonst*, 65–74.

ry, when in Italy a growing number of artisans started to co-operate with the leading humanists of their time in attempting to grasp the technical literature of antiquity.<sup>21</sup>

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the emerging fascination with the mechanical arts became a crucial element in the effort made by Petrus Ramus (1515–1572) to destroy the Aristotelian tradition altogether.<sup>22</sup> This Protestant professor of philosophy and eloquence at the Collège Royal in Paris launched a pedagogical campaign which turned into a utilitarian revolution.<sup>23</sup> Tirelessly arguing that knowledge which could not be applied was not warranted, Ramus stressed that no science was better suited to illustrate this than mathematics, and furthermore that mathematics owed its *raison d'être* exclusively to its practical use. Over the last few decades, Ramism has given rise to all kinds of historical hypotheses. On the one hand, scholars seem to agree that philosophically Ramism is superficial to say the least. Yet the overwhelming success of Ramism as a didactic movement is beyond dispute. One of the more recent attempts to assess the lasting effect of Ramism on European culture argues that its utilitarian attitude reveals a crucial shift of emphasis within Renaissance humanism, in that Ramus broke decisively with the ideal of an education in the liberal arts as being the *via regia* towards civic virtue, and almost singlehandedly turned the study of the arts into a profitable career, providing professional prospects for the upwardly mobile.<sup>24</sup>

Ramus' influence seems to have been largely restricted to the Protestant countries of Scandinavia, Germany and England. Traditionally, little attention has been paid to Ramism in the Low Countries,<sup>25</sup> but a number of important Dutch Ramists have been iden-

<sup>21</sup> Rossi, *Philosophy, Technology, and the Arts*, 1–62.

<sup>22</sup> Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 22–24, 36–48, 172–175, 197–198, 207–208.

<sup>23</sup> Hooykaas, *Humanisme, science et Réforme*, 75–90; Verdonk, *Petrus Ramus en de wiskunde*, 343–356; Van Berkel, *Isaac Beekman*, 259–271.

<sup>24</sup> Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, 168: 'Ramus deliberately discarded the difficulty and rigour of high scholastic schooling and thereby attracted those who regarded education as a means to social position rather than as a preparation for a life of scholarship (or of theological debate). In so doing he explicitly (though not necessarily deliberately) achieved the final *secularisation* of humanist teaching—the transition from "humanism" to "the humanities". He proposed as a test of an education that it should prove "useful"—that it should repay those who undertook it with skills applicable outside the universities. He thereby won the approval of a mercantile class determined to get value for money from their "investment" in their sons' education.'

<sup>25</sup> Dibon, 'L'influence de Ramus aux universités néerlandaises'; Van Berkel, *Isaac Beekman*, 271–290 and 'Franeker als centrum van ramisme'. On individual Ramists,

tified. One of them was the first Leiden professor of mathematics Rudolf Snellius, who as we have seen co-operated with the mathematicians of the Leiden engineering school. Snellius edited Ramus' mathematical works and was himself a Ramist in his assessment of knowledge as such: 'the origins and the beginning of philosophy,' according to Snellius, are its use: 'philosophy itself concentrates on the fruitful application for human existence.' He has even been called the ideologist of the practical scientific culture which flourished outside the Dutch universities of the time. However, whereas Ramus was mainly concerned with the orderly presentation of acquired knowledge, Ramists like Snellius regarded co-operation with artisans and engineers as essential to the acquisition of *new* scientific insights. This has led the Dutch historian Klaas van Berkel to argue that Snellius' Ramism constituted not merely a didactic ideal, but a genuine ideology of science.<sup>26</sup> According to Van Berkel, it was this 'scientific' Ramism which permeated the world-view of the candle-maker, headmaster and avid correspondent Isaac Beeckman (1585–1637). He was the author of arguably the first completely mechanistic natural philosophy in Europe, which remained unpublished until the middle of the twentieth century. Snellius' Ramism became so important to Beeckman, because it served as the ideology of the mechanical arts and sciences, it:

provided Beeckman with the arguments for using a way of thinking characteristic of the mechanical arts in natural philosophical discourse. (...) In the second place, Ramus' dialectic and rhetoric, with their stress on simplicity, clearness and 'common-sense' argumentation, stimulated Beeckman to make 'picturability' a main demarcation criterion in science: he only wanted to accept concepts which could be given a picturable representation.<sup>27</sup>

The imagery of the mechanical instrument was therefore ultimately transformed from a tool which could be used for opening up the natural world, into the very model of nature itself.

Beeckman, however, did not publish his findings, and his influence has been notoriously difficult to assess, but his correspondence and his personal contacts with key-figures such as Descartes, Gassendi and Mersenne have secured him a place in the historiography of the scientific revolution. The story of his encounter with Descartes

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see Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames*; Jorink, 'Tussen Aristoteles en Copernicus'.

<sup>26</sup> Van Berkel, *Isaac Beeckman*, 278.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

in Breda in 1618 is a classic in its own right: Beeckman noted in his journal that at last he had met someone in the town who spoke Latin. Although in later years, Descartes would go out of his way to downplay Beeckman's contribution to his natural philosophy, it is now generally agreed upon that the French philosopher not only borrowed his mathematical approach to physics from his Dutch friend, but also his corpuscularian theory of matter. During the winter of 1618 the two worked on musical intervals, falling bodies and hydrostatics, and they continued their discussions through correspondence.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, it seems clear that the predominantly practical orientation of Dutch scientists and of mathematicians like Stevin, Snellius, Metius, Van Schooten sr., and last but not least Isaac Beeckman not only reflected the peculiar needs of a nation at war, but also fitted into a typically Renaissance conception of co-operation between scientists and artisans—a conception which had started to obliterate the classical distinction between theory and practice well before Stevin recorded his own views on the relationship between *spiegelingh* and *daet*.<sup>29</sup>

## 2. Moral Instruction

While Stevin and his colleagues were instructing the Dutch in securing the future of the Republic, the struggle for its soul was still raging. From the 1560s onwards, after the first Lutheran and Mennonite waves had swept the religious landscape of the Low Countries, Calvinist reformers more or less hijacked the Revolt, aspiring to establish a National Reformed Orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup> However, in 1572 both William of Orange and the States of Holland had already declared that freedom of religion was to be guaranteed.<sup>31</sup> The first university to be established in Holland congratulated itself on being *Praesidium libertatis*.

From the early days of the Revolt, the question as to how to secure the survival of a state that was no more than a loose federation of provinces had been high on the agenda of political theorists. In

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 292 ff; Gaukroger, *Descartes*, 68–103. On the accuracy of the story of their first encounter, to be found in Baillet's biography of Descartes, see Van Berkel, *Isaac Beeckman*, 40–48.

<sup>29</sup> On the possible influence of Ramus on Stevin, see Verdonk, 'Vom Einfluss des P. de la Ramée auf Simon Stevin'.

<sup>30</sup> Duke, 'The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism'.

<sup>31</sup> Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 5.

fact, this question was at the heart of the efforts of the greatest humanist scholar in the Republic, Justus Lipsius (1547–1606),<sup>32</sup> who in the words of Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, ‘developed a pedagogical programme even more adaptable than Ramus’ and one even better suited to the needs of late sixteenth-century Europe. Where Ramus had stressed the arts of reason and discourse, Lipsius stressed those of government and war.’<sup>33</sup> Three years after the foundation of the university of Leiden, its curators managed to attract this young author of a brilliant edition of Tacitus (1576), whose appointment to the chair of history put the budding university firmly on the map of European scholarship.<sup>34</sup> Apart from his unrivalled authority in questions of classical studies, Lipsius’ enduring reputation was based mainly on the phenomenal success of his *De Constantia* published in 1584, the year that saw the assassination of William of Orange.

*De Constantia*, a dialogue set in a garden, takes its point of departure from the chaos resulting from the Revolt. A young scholar from Louvain decides to flee the insecurities beleaguering the Low Countries, and sets off for Vienna. On his way to more peaceful surroundings, he stops at Liège, where his old friend Carolus Langius convinces him of the inadvisability of rejecting his native country. Reason tells us that we must not flee from our country, but from our emotions.<sup>35</sup> Rest and peacefulness can only be found within. The only change which matters is that of personal attitude, that of following reason, for Reason leads to *Constantia*, whereas Opinion produces *Levitas*.<sup>36</sup> Despite Lipsius’ repeated use of horticultural images,<sup>37</sup> combining both the peacefulness and the naturalness of the attitude propounded in this dialogue, *De Constantia* is also full of military metaphors—the beleaguered self will only be liberated after

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<sup>32</sup> Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 180–187. On Lipsius’ Leiden years, see Mout, ‘Justus Lipsius at Leiden University’ and ‘In het schip: Justus Lipsius en de Nederlandse Opstand tot 1591’; Heesakkers, ‘Justus Lipsius in Leiden’; Enenkel and Heesakkers (eds.) *Lipsius in Leiden*.

<sup>33</sup> Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, 197. For a recent survey of *Lipsiana*, see Gerlo, ‘Les études lipsiennes: état de question’.

<sup>34</sup> For an account of the way in which the Leiden curators attracted some of the most talented scholars of Europe, see Otterspeer, *Groepsportret met Dame I*, 85 ff, 108 ff and 176–179.

<sup>35</sup> Lipsius, *De Constantia*, in: *Opera Omnia*, IV, 527: ‘Itaque non patria fugienda, Lipsi: sed affectus sunt: et firmandus ita formandusque hic animus, ut quies nobis in turbis sit et pax inter media arma.’

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 530–531: ‘*Constantiam* hic appello, rectum et immotum animi robor, non elati externis aut fortuitis, non depressi.’

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, II, Chapters 1 and 2.

firm resistance;<sup>38</sup> in order to withstand the attacks on its tranquility, it has to be harnessed and disciplined until it is governed by *Constantia*. To all intents and purposes, Lipsius describes the cultivation of this moral attitude as a *battle*—a battle for the soul.

Against the background of an emerging state whose inhabitants would continue to hold their own in their choice of religion, Lipsius' neo-Stoicism not only articulated Dutch anxieties in the face of war, but also served as a moral programme which offered common ground to the competing factions within the Republic. Since his classical sources were neutral from a religious point of view, Catholics and Calvinists, Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants, Lutherans and Mennonites could follow up on the lessons Lipsius drew from them. The message of this Leiden professor, who at the end of his career boasted 'Ego e philologia philosophiam feci'<sup>39</sup> fitted hand in glove with the ideology behind the very foundation of his university, which was not opened simply to provide the Republic with a Protestant school of theology: 'the guiding principle in founding this Protestant University was the introduction of a complete humanistic *Academia* in which no Faculty was necessarily superior to another. And it can be concluded, in view of the avowed educational theories and the peculiar moment selected for putting them into practice, that the University was confidently created not in spite of, but because of the political chaos of the moment, in an attempt to let *Sapientia* establish order and harmony.'<sup>40</sup>

In this respect, Lipsius' very definition of philosophy is highly significant: the purpose of philosophy is purely practical. It ought to instruct. This becomes apparent especially in his *Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam* (1604), in which he leans heavily on Seneca, whose *Epistolae* as well his *De vita beata* are often quoted: learning is not an end itself, but only a means, the ultimate goal of *sapientia* being *action*, for 'Philosophiam Studium esse Virtutis',<sup>41</sup> and 'Quid Philosophia, nisi vitae Lex est?'<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, 'facefe docet philosophia, non dicere.'<sup>43</sup> And so on, and so on. Hence Lipsius'

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, I, Chapters 5, 8, 10, 13 and 15.

<sup>39</sup> Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics*, 137–180; Lipsius, *Opera Omnia*, II, 413.

<sup>40</sup> Van Dorsten, *Poets, Patrons, and Professors*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Seneca, *Epistola* 89; Lipsius, *Manuductio*, in: *Opera Omnia*, IV, 685.

<sup>42</sup> Seneca, *Epistola* 94; Lipsius, *Manuductio*, in: *Opera Omnia*, IV, 685.

<sup>43</sup> Seneca, *Epistola* 20; Lipsius, *Manuductio*, in: *Opera Omnia*, IV, 697: '... et hoc exigit, ut ad legem suam quisque vivat, ne orationi vita dissentiat, ut ipsa intra se vita unius sit omnium actionum sine dissensione coloris. Maximum hoc est et officium sapientiae et indicium, ut verbis opera concordent, ut ipse ubique par sibi idem sit.'

Stoic distinction between philosophy and wisdom, wisdom being the perfect good of the human mind, philosophy being the love of wisdom and the endeavour to attain it.<sup>44</sup> In fact, this Senecan line of reasoning comes very close to the views Stevin had developed on the sciences in his essay on *Spiegelingh en Daet*. According to Seneca and to Lipsius, philosophy is both theoretical and practical, since it ‘contemplates and at the same time acts’.<sup>45</sup> Stevin’s views on the relationship between theory and practice have a particular affinity with Seneca’s essay on first principles.

In short, Lipsius, the humanist scholar, tried to do for philosophy what Stevin, the Renaissance engineer, had attempted to achieve for the sciences. Traditionally, of all the branches of philosophy, only moral philosophy was considered part of the humanities and hence of the professional competence of the humanist.<sup>46</sup> Again, Lipsius’ predominantly practical stance perfectly reflected the challenges the emerging Republic was actually facing. The political ramifications of this campaign to install a *robur animi* fit to deal with the demands of the age were elaborated by Lipsius in his *Politicorum libri sex* (1589), in which he suggested that under the circumstances the Dutch were best advised to opt for a strong monarchical government.<sup>47</sup> In this manual, written for the instruction of rulers and princes, Lipsius developed further his *philosophia militans* on the basis of a huge amount of classical sources, mainly derived from Roman Stoicism. This time, he mainly made use of Tacitus. The English translation (1594) of his *Politica* contains a list of the ‘Authors, from whom this discourse is gathered’:

Amongst the which *Cornelius Tacitus* hath the preheminance, being recited extraordinarily because he alone affordeth more matter, then all the rest. The reason thereof consisteth in the wisdom of the man, both because he is very sententious, as likewise because he *Lipsius* had bene very conversant with him ...<sup>48</sup>

Lipsius even went so far as to publish three treatises on the military history of Rome, which Maurice, together with counts William

<sup>44</sup> Seneca, *Epistola* 89; Lipsius, *Manuductio*, in: *Opera Omnia*, IV, 698: ‘Philosophia sapientiae amor est et adfectatio. Haec eo tendit, quo illa pervenit.’

<sup>45</sup> Seneca, *Epistola* 95; Lipsius, *Manuductio*, in: *Opera Omnia*, IV, 695: ‘Philosophia autem et contemplativa est at activa; spectat simulque agitque.’

<sup>46</sup> Kristeller, ‘Humanism’, 134. Cf. IJsewijn, ‘Humanism in the Low Countries’, 195.

<sup>47</sup> Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 45–63; Waszink, ‘Virtuous Deception’.

<sup>48</sup> Lipsius, *Six Books of Politickes*. See Morford, ‘Tacitean Prudentia’; Waszink, ‘Inventio in the *Politica*’.

Louis and John VII of Nassau, put to good use in their momentous army reforms of the 1590s. As has been stressed by a host of historians and military experts, these reforms, which resulted in a uniquely disciplined Dutch army, played an invaluable role in securing the successful outcome of the Revolt.<sup>49</sup> 'Neostoicism', as Gerhard Oestreich put it, 'meant the moral and spiritual arming of the individual and the community. Dutch philology, under the influence of Neostoic philosophy, placed itself in the service of the state and helped to arm it politically and militarily.'<sup>50</sup>

Lipsius' stance, however, does reveal a significant ambiguity in that the ethical underpinning of his humanism seems to yield to an avowed utilitarianism.<sup>51</sup> What is more, his Nicodemism incurred the wrath of many of his colleagues, who were appalled by the ease with which he changed colours when he returned to the Catholic university of Louvain.<sup>52</sup> And despite the enduring success of Lipsius' moral philosophy, his political ideas failed to make a similar impact. Both his Machiavellian treatment of religion as a means to enhance national unity—essential for the survival of any state let alone a state at war—and his lack of appreciation of the time-honoured autonomy of the provinces, were at odds with the actual history of the Republic. Moreover, his almost complete disregard for the political notion of liberty—so prominent in Machiavelli—also made him something of an outsider to the indigenous debate on the Revolt. As Martin van Gelderen has observed on the political thought of the time:

From the very beginning liberty was presented as the political value *par excellence*, the 'daughter of the Netherlands', the source of prosperity and justice. The resistance to Philip II was essentially presented as the defence of this very liberty, which was threatened by the lust for power and the tyrannical ambitions of Philip II's government. In fact the political order itself was argued to be deliberately created by the ancestors in order to safeguard liberty.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, 76–89; Reinhart, 'Humanismus und Militarismus'; Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 6–24.

<sup>50</sup> Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, 75.

<sup>51</sup> Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, 199: 'As philology became value-free and pedagogy became pragmatic, the larger value of both enterprises was called into question. Why study the ancient world if not to become more virtuous? But a training in virtue now seemed to be one quality that neither scholars nor teachers could offer.'

<sup>52</sup> Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, 123.

<sup>53</sup> Van Gelderen, 'The Machiavellian Moment', 216. See also by the same author: 'De Nederlandse Opstand'.



Lipsius' former admirer, the Haarlem engraver and poet Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1522–1590), with whom he entered into a bitter debate on the question whether heretics should be executed, seems to have been more in touch with the prevailing mood. Against Lipsius' plea for religious unity guaranteed by the civil authorities — 'wee firmly holde this opinion that one religion ought to be observed in one kingdome'<sup>54</sup> —, Coornhert, after the publication of Lipsius' *Politicorum libri sex*, argued that it was both unchristian and impossible to punish heretics, and that therefore religious toleration was the only viable answer to the religious pluriformity which would continue to characterize the Republic.<sup>55</sup> Then again, Lipsius' campaigning in favour of Roman Stoicism was to receive ample support in the Republic, among men whose influence on the hearts and minds of their compatriots was greater than any lecture or treatise by a university professor. For while Simon Stevin — who chose Lipsius' side in his debate with Coornhert<sup>56</sup> — taught them how to build a state, and while Lipsius provided a moral psychology, enabling the Dutch élite to survive the Revolt, the local 'chambers of rhetoric' supplied the Dutch with a literary language of their own, which served as a vehicle for transmitting much of the moral wisdom of Seneca and Tacitus wrapped in Lipsius' scholarly Latin.

By 1600, the young P.C. Hooft (1581–1647), while in Florence, wrote a poem dedicated to the Amsterdam chamber *De Eglentier* in which he stated that only recently, and thanks to the efforts of Spiegel, Coornhert and Jan van Hout had the Dutch language been able to produce poetry which could stand comparison with Italian literature.<sup>57</sup> Nearly fifty years later, Gerard Brandt (1626–1685) echoed this claim, again pointing to Spiegel (1549–1610) as the founder of Dutch poetry, and to Hooft and Vondel (1587–1679) as his true heirs. Whilst it has been argued that the roots of Spiegel's poetics probably go back much further to earlier sixteenth-century views, his lasting influence seems beyond dispute.<sup>58</sup> His famous *Hert-Spiegel* (Mirror of the Heart), composed in 1601 and published in 1614,

<sup>54</sup> Lipsius, *Sixe Books of Politickes*, 63.

<sup>55</sup> Bongers, *Leven en werk van D.V. Coornhert*, 140–157; Bergsma, "“God alleen mach die ziele dooden”". In fact, Coornhert had already objected to *De Constantia*. See Mout, "“Which Tyrant Curtails My Free Mind?”"; Hoven, 'Les réactions de Juste Lipse'.

<sup>56</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Simon Stevin*, 277–286.

<sup>57</sup> Spies, '*Hier is gheen Helicon ...*', 3–4. See also her 'The Amsterdam Chamber De Eglentier'.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–22.

amply testifies to the almost self-evident authority of the Stoic moral outlook. (Although the recognition that the *Hert-spiegel* was an attempt to package a basically Roman morality with a highly personal and muscular Dutch, this should not diminish our awareness of the deeply Christian nature of his message. ‘Naturam sequere’ is to follow God; to follow reason is to follow God’s will.)<sup>59</sup>

As a director of *De Eglentier*, Spiegel was indeed in an excellent position to put his mark on the emerging Dutch literary culture of the Republic, which he steered forward in a number of ways. It was under his direction that between 1584 and 1587 *De Eglentier* published a grammar, a dialectic and a rhetoric—all in Dutch. And it was Spiegel who asked his friend Coornhert to publish his *Zedekunst* (1586), the first European ethics in the vernacular—packed with references to the Stoa, needless to say. For our purposes, it is Spiegel’s criticism of Aristotle in particular, which looks significant: Spiegel called Aristotle a ‘schijngelerde Prins’, in brief a fake.<sup>60</sup> He claimed that unlike Socrates, Aristotle was not able to *live* his philosophy, on account of its not being founded on self-knowledge.<sup>61</sup> What is more, Aristotle had denied the basic Stoic proposition that natural reason is able to control the emotions, which according to Spiegel is the very first key to morality.<sup>62</sup> The importance attached to self-knowledge was not, of course, exclusively Stoic, for first and foremost it was part of the Platonic heritage. It is significant that Spiegel should have presented Socrates as a Stoic hero, and used many Platonic images, such as the Myth of the Cave, to illustrate his basically Roman morality. A similar eclectic use of Platonism can be found in a well-known letter Spiegel wrote in 1602 to the young P.C. Hooft—who was to succeed him as director of *De Eglentier* and who was destined to become the greatest Renaissance poet of the Republic—in which Socrates, Horace, Seneca and Montaigne are called upon as evidence that self-knowledge is able to overcome the perils of self-love.<sup>63</sup> In Coornhert’s *Zedekunst* too, ideas and images of the Platonic tradition abound.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Buisman, *De ethische denkbeelden van Hendrik Laurensz. Spiegel*, 73–77; Spiegel, *Hert-spiegel*, cxvi–cxxxix.

<sup>60</sup> Spiegel, *Hert-spiegel*, IV, 329.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii–xxxiii; IV, 328.

<sup>62</sup> Buisman, *De ethische denkbeelden van Hendrik Laurensz. Spiegel*, 40.

<sup>63</sup> Hooft, *Briefwisseling*, I, 79–83. For a recent and authoritative attempt to downplay the relevance of philosophy as such for our understanding of Hooft: Tuijnman, ‘Hooft en de filosoof’.

<sup>64</sup> Fresco, ‘Coornhert en de Oudheid’.

Coornhert and Spiegel's allegiance to the neo-Platonic heritage was to be continued in the poetics of the young Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655). His oration in Leiden, delivered in 1603 when he was installed as *extraordinarius* in *Poetica*, reveals a highly eclectic combination of similar conceptions, poetic genius being treated as a divinely inspired vision, and being combined with a Stoic view of the rational harmony of reality at large.<sup>65</sup> P.C. Hooft also showed deep affinity with the inheritance of Ficino (1433–1499) and Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), both in his pastoral play *Granida* and in *Dankbaar genoegen*, a poem full of references to neo-Platonism.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, this neo-Platonic revival failed to make a lasting impact on Dutch culture in the way neo-Stoicism did, for the effect of neo-Stoicism on the literary culture of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was not confined to the limited possibilities of didactic poetry. It also dominated the moral vocabulary of the Dutch theatre.<sup>67</sup> Literary historians agree that the classical humanist drama of the Golden Age is to be classified as 'Scaligeran-Senecan'. Starting around 1600 and attaining its ultimate form twenty years later, it did not change fundamentally after 1640. A series of in-depth analyses of early seventeenth-century plays has revealed the immense authority of J.C. Scaliger's (1484–1558) poetics, re-edited repeatedly by Scaliger's philologist son, Joseph (1540–1609), who succeeded Lipsius at Leiden in 1593. As is well known, Scaliger had more or less reiterated Horatius' *Ars poetica*, according to which the main object of any literary work of art is 'to instruct in a pleasing manner'. Horatius and Scaliger argued, contrary to Aristotle's poetics, that the purpose of literature was not to create an imagined reality, but to be purely educational. Hence the importance of the *ars rhetorica*, the art of reasoned persuasion.<sup>68</sup>

One of the most prominent representatives of this Scaligeran-Senecan tradition, was the playwright Samuel Coster (1579–1655), a former student of Scaliger jr. Plays such as his *Ithys*, *Polyxena*, and *Iphigenia*, all written during the 1610s, have been shown to be strictly Scaligeran in their poetics and perfectly Senecan in their morality. His treatment of the passions in particular shows him to have been even more orthodox a Stoic than Hooft and Bredero, who also

<sup>65</sup> Meter, *The Literary Theories of Daniel Heinsius*, 43–96.

<sup>66</sup> Veenstra, 'Hooft: enkele aspecten', 105–205.

<sup>67</sup> Schenkeveld, *Dutch Literature in the Age of Rembrandt*, 57–75.

<sup>68</sup> Smits-Veldt, *Samuel Coster*, 29ff and *Het Nederlandse renaissance-toneel*, 51–60. See also the introduction by Spies to Vondel, *Twee zeevaart-gedichten*.

stressed the perils of emotional attachment to what is morally indifferent, and who too praised the virtue of *Constantia*. Lipsius' *De Constantia* is explicitly praised in *Polyxena*.<sup>69</sup> The same urge to provide his audience with moral instruction is revealed in 1617 by Coster's initiative in establishing a 'Nederduytsche Academie' in Amsterdam. The object of this 'Open University' was the education of the citizens of Amsterdam in a truly humanist manner, but it was a short-lived project, and it was closed down after only a decade.<sup>70</sup>

From the middle of the seventeenth century, this essentially didactic theatre appears to have been on the wane. Literary historians have pointed to the limited theatrical possibilities of this particular genre, and to the literary advantages of Aristotelian poetics. As early as 1606, the young Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649) had published his *Oratoriarum Institutionum Libri sex*, which was followed five years later by Daniel Heinsius' equally Aristotelian *De Tragoediae Constitutione*, and some forty years later by his own *De Artis Poeticae Natura ac Constitutione Liber* (1647).<sup>71</sup> The efforts of such eminent scholars as Heinsius and Vossius to reinvent Aristotelian poetics were very important, and have been shown to have influenced not only the biblical tragedies of Vondel,<sup>72</sup> but also the literary cultures of England and France.<sup>73</sup> A classical hero such as Hooft's *Baeto* does indeed remain a rather static paragon of virtue,<sup>74</sup> but by the late 1640s the exhortation to *patientia* and *fortitudo* in times of adversity, to the cultivation of *continentia* and *temperantia* when the smiles of *fortuna* are more in evidence, must also have become rather tedious. By this time, the wisdom of Seneca and Lipsius must have appeared to be rather out of date. The war had been won and the Republic had become an incredibly successful merchant state, no longer threatened by the prospect of apparently imminent destruction, which had loomed so large in Lipsius' days.

<sup>69</sup> Smits-Veldt, *Samuel Coster*, 294–304; Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid*, 31–46.

<sup>70</sup> Smits-Veldt, 'De "Nederduytsche Academie" van Samuel Coster'.

<sup>71</sup> Rademaker, *Life and Work of Gerardus Johannes Vossius*, 74–81 and 301–306; Meter, *The Literary Theories of Daniel Heinsius*, 137 ff. On Vossius, see also Sellin, 'The Last of the Renaissance Monsters', in which the Aristotelianism of the *Institutions* is questioned.

<sup>72</sup> Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, II, 290 ff; Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid*, 31–73, 126–137.

<sup>73</sup> Kern, *The Influence of Heinsius and Vossius*; Sellin, *Daniel Heinsius and Stuart England*.

<sup>74</sup> Smits-Veldt, *Het Nederlandse renaissancetoneel*, 73; Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid*, 135–137.

3. *Unity and Freedom*

In Antwerp, on 9 April 1609, a treaty was signed in accordance with which Spain and the Netherlands ceased hostilities for the next twelve years. This constituted the first step on the way to international recognition of the Republic as a sovereign state. Several leading politicians and men of letters, though content with the temporary cessation of the war, foresaw the risks inherent in losing a common foe. Internal strife within the Republic had so far been tempered, but it was now to bring the Republic to the brink of *civil war*.<sup>75</sup> The *casus belli* was unusual, to say the least. In the theological faculty at Leiden in 1604, professor Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) came into conflict with his colleague Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641) over the exact interpretation of Calvin's theory of predestination. An orthodox Calvinist, Gomarus had taught that God's election was exclusively the result of His sovereign Grace, and had therefore been decided at the time of the creation. Arminius felt that man was free to accept or decline the gift of Grace, and that man was therefore responsible for human evil in the world.<sup>76</sup> The supporters of these two Calvinists also started quarrelling over the relationship between church and state.<sup>77</sup> Whereas Arminians like Uytenbogaert (1557–1644) and Episcopius (1583–1643) argued that the secular authorities should be granted authority over the direction of the established Calvinist church, the Gomarists felt that the church should be essentially autonomous, especially in the appointment and examination of ministers. Both sides agreed that their dispute could only be settled by a national synod, which would have to be called for by the States General.

Well before this synod actually took place, the outcome had been settled. For once the two most powerful men in the Republic had chosen sides, this academic dispute spilled over into the political arena. In 1610 forty-four Arminians put a so-called *Remonstrantie* before the States of Holland, in which they defined their own position and requested a national synod. The advocate of the States, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who had held this key position since 1586, took up the cause of these 'Remonstrants', and attempted to restore or-

<sup>75</sup> Some general titles: Van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen*; Groenveld *et al.*, *De kogel door de kerk?*, 182 ff and *De bruid in de schuit*, 10–44; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 399–449. See also the splendid introduction by Rabbie to Grotius, *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas*.

<sup>76</sup> Of both antagonists biographies are available: Van Itterzon, *Franciscus Gomarus*; Bangs, *Arminius*.

<sup>77</sup> Nobbs, *Theocracy and Toleration*.

der in the increasingly divided established church of Holland. The Gomarists or 'Counter-Remonstrants' fought back, developing the argument that Arminianism was not only theologically unsound, but also unpatriotic. Maurice, Stadholder and general of the armies of the States General, whose relationship with Oldenbarnevelt deteriorated sharply during the truce, grew increasingly worried over the failure of Oldenbarnevelt's Arminian policies to restore order in the public church. He therefore decided to take matters into his own hand and to isolate Holland by removing Arminian magistrates from Overijssel and Utrecht, and in August 1618 arresting Oldenbarnevelt and his personal staff, including Grotius. This amounted to a *coup d'état*, and when three months later the National Synod was finally convened at Dordrecht, the Counter-Remonstrants won the day. The synod turned into a court, which effectively banned from the Republic all two hundred Remonstrant ministers, little less than a fifth of the entire Dutch ministry. Shortly afterwards the States General appointed another court, which passed the death sentence on the seventy-one year old Oldenbarnevelt, who was beheaded in The Hague on 13 May 1619. His friends received life-sentences.<sup>78</sup>

With regards to the early days of the Eighty Years' War, it has been observed that in much of the political literature of the time 'concord and unity were seen as indispensable for the preservation of liberty and the common good of the fatherland, the supreme political values.'<sup>79</sup> Time and again Tacitus, Cicero, Sallust, Livy and Seneca were quoted to the effect that, 'concord makes small commonwealths great, discord disrupts the greatest'.<sup>80</sup> During the seventeenth century Tacitus' influence in particular was to make itself felt, most notably in P.C. Hooft's historical work. This is important, since Hooft, even by his contemporaries, was considered the father of Dutch historiography. It has even been claimed that in the Republic he did for the study of history what Stevin had done for science.<sup>81</sup> Not only did he produce extensive translations of Tacitus, but his celebrated *Nederlandsche Historieën* on the history of the Dutch people from 1555 onwards, which was published in twenty-seven volumes between 1642 and 1654, was modelled in both style and contents on

<sup>78</sup> On the career of Van Oldenbarnevelt, see Den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*. A biography of Maurice, written by A. van Deursen is forthcoming.

<sup>79</sup> Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 193.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 194, quoting Sallust, *Bellum Jurguthinum*, 10.6 and Seneca, *Epistola* 94.

<sup>81</sup> According to Annie Romein-Verschoor, as quoted in Peeters, 'P.C. Hooft en P.C. Tacitus', 115.

Tacitus' *Annales* and *Historiae*. His contemporaries crowned him 'the Dutch Tacitus', his biographer Brandt recorded that he had read the Roman historian through fifty-two times,<sup>82</sup> and earlier efforts such as his *Hendrik de Grôte* (1626), on the French King Henry IV, and his *Rampzaaligheeden der Verheffinge van den Huize Medicis* (1635–1636), have been shown to be deeply influenced by Tacitus.<sup>83</sup>

During the Twelve Years' Truce, Hooft brought his deep concern with the unity of his fatherland to the stage in such seminal plays as *Geeraerdt van Velsen* (1613) and *Baeto* (1617). The former is concerned with the assassination of the legendary Count Floris V of Holland, the latter with the mythical first king of 'Batavia'.<sup>84</sup> As well as bringing before the Dutch the ancient lineage of their nation, these plays concentrated on the perils of civil discord. Although *De Constantia* had made the point that patriotism as such is unphilosophical, Lipsius had devoted the last of his *Six Books on Politickes* to 'civill warre': 'Then the which, nothing is more miserable, nothing more dishonorable, which I may rightlie terme, the verie sea of calamities.'<sup>85</sup> The very device of the States General said it all: *Concordia res parvae crescunt*. This message was to be repeated again and again by a host of Dutch authors. The young Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), future secretary to the Stadholder, wrote poems entitled '*Concordia discors*' and '*Timultuanti Bataviae*'. 'En cette appréhension', he wrote, 'devons nous vivre continuellement: *nihil praestare majus fortuna potest quam hostium discordiam*.'<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, the recognition that concord was needed to survive, did not inspire Dutch authors to argue in favour of curtailing the liberties the Revolt was supposed to have been all about in the first place. Freedom of conscience was widely held to be essential to the future of the Republic, though it was very differently interpreted, as we have seen when considering the debate between Lipsius and Coorn-

<sup>82</sup> Brandt, *Het leven van Pieter Corn. Hooft*, 27 and 32.

<sup>83</sup> Cornelissen, 'Hooft en Tacitus'. See, however, also Groenveld, *Hooft als historieschrijver*, esp. 88 and more in general: Haitsma Mulier, 'Grotius, Hooft, and the Writing of History'; Peeters, 'Een Latijnse traditie' and 'Hooft, Tacitus en de Medici'.

<sup>84</sup> See also Schöffer, 'The Batavian Myth'; Duits, 'Van Achilles tot Baeto'; Van Tricht, *Het leven van P.C. Hooft*, 65–91; Haitsma Mulier, 'De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken'.

<sup>85</sup> Lipsius, *Six Books of Politickes*, 187.

<sup>86</sup> Cornelissen, 'Hooft en Tacitus', 81. See also the same author's classic article 'Rembrandt—De Eendracht van het land'. On the emergence of a Dutch sense of belonging to a common 'nation' or 'fatherland', see Tilmans, 'De ontwikkeling van een vaderland-begrip'; Groenveld, '"Natie" en "patria" bij zestiende-eeuwse Nederlanders'.

hert.<sup>87</sup> Hooft for instance, himself a supporter of the established church, was all in favour of mitigated tolerance, and bravely sought to defend persecuted Remonstrants such as Grotius.<sup>88</sup> What is more, the practical attitude towards knowledge, sketched above, went hand in hand with a series of technological innovations. These resulted in an industrial lead, which was evidently closely linked to the lack of any one strong authority in the Republic. The technological advances certainly furthered seventeenth-century industrial expansion, leading to marked improvements in fishing, and to a rise in the physical productivity of labour—most notably in the shipping industry.<sup>89</sup> The emergence of these innovations has been accounted for by pointing to such developments as the successive waves of highly skilled immigrants from Antwerp, from the Sephardic communities of Southern Europe, and finally from French Protestants in the 1680s. The importance, from 1584 onwards, of the initiative of the States General in officially granting patents for inventions has also been stressed. Not surprisingly, the first and third of these patents were granted to Stevin.<sup>90</sup> The numbers of patents granted show a rapid increase until the 1630s, and an average number per year of 5.6 between 1590 and 1680.<sup>91</sup> This institutional arrangement secured the intellectual ownership of inventions, and made it worthwhile, that is potentially profitable, to invest in sustained research efforts.

Even more important, however, was the decentralised political organisation which had emerged from the Revolt. As one recent commentator has put it:

As individual urban communities commonly vied with each other in improving the quality of local production or in attracting new economic activities that promised to increase the welfare and employment opportunities of their own citizens, inventors found themselves in a seller's market. They could profit from privileges granted by local authorities and even play off one city against another. As long as this competition endured, creativity could thrive.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 120ff and 23ff. For recent assessments of contemporary religious toleration, see: Bots, 'Tolerantie of gecultiveerde tweedracht'; Bergsma, 'Church, State and People'; Berkvens-Stevelinck *et al.* (eds.) *The Emergence of Toleration in the Dutch Republic*; Lademacher, 'Freiheit—Religion—Gewissen'; Broeyer, 'Ijkpunt 1650'.

<sup>88</sup> Brandt, *Het leven van Pieter Corn. Hooft*, 34. See Smits-Veldt, 'Hooft en De Groot'.

<sup>89</sup> Davids, 'Technological Change'.

<sup>90</sup> Stevin, *Principal Works*, V, 11–45.

<sup>91</sup> Davids, 'Technological Change', 95–96, based on Doorman, *Octrooien voor uitvindingen*.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.



Creativity, however, was not the only thing that thrived thanks to the lack of any strong central government in the Republic. The trauma of the quarrels which during the Truce had nearly destroyed the state, would continue to haunt its scholars and politicians, and found its ultimate spokesman—and victim—in Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), who was himself both a scholar and a politician. It would be folly to pretend that it is possible to do justice to his achievements in the context of a general survey such as this. By mentioning him, we simply intend to indicate how fundamental for his intellectual career, the questions were which had been raised during the Truce. This career can in fact be read as a series of efforts to overcome the divisions within the Republic.

In 1594 the proverbial prodigy Grotius, then aged eleven, was welcomed by the curator of Leiden university.<sup>93</sup> He did not stop at amazing his professors by his brilliance in philology, theology and law. It became evident at a very early stage, that his future lay in politics rather than in an academic career, and at the age of fifteen he accompanied Oldenbarnevelt on a diplomatic mission to France. To the great relief of his father Jan de Groot, a distinguished regent from Delft, the sixteen-year old lawyer set up a profitable practice in The Hague, moving ever more closely to the corridors of power in the Republic. He soon became advocate-fiscal at the Court of Holland and Zeeland, and in several treatises such as *De Mare libero* (1609) and *De Antiquitate Reipublicae Batavae* (1610), he argued against the Portuguese for the right of the Dutch to travel the oceans as they pleased, and against the Spanish for the ancient sovereignty of the States.<sup>94</sup>

By this time, his involvement in affairs of state had also inspired him to compose a number of works in which he addressed the mounting crisis within Dutch Calvinism. Thus, in 1611 he wrote a short tract entitled *Meletius*, which has only recently been re-discovered and published, in which he attempted to show that at heart Christianity consisted of a small number of essential or ‘necessary’ dogma’s, and that the disagreements among Christians on the *non-necessaria* could never serve as a pretext for schisms. Grotius’ concern for the unity of the Republic is immediately apparent from the opening lines of this ‘letter to a friend’:

<sup>93</sup> Ridderikhoff, ‘De universitaire studies van Hugo de Groot’. For a general biographical sketch, see Nellen, *Hugo de Groot*.

<sup>94</sup> For a general interpretation of Grotius’ *politica*, see Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 154–201.

some are Guelders and other Frisians; and would that the peoples of Holland and Zealand, who always used to be so closely connected, differed only in name and not also in sympathy! Not to mention at this point the cities—rival centres rather—, the quarrels between city districts or the enmity between the great families. When we take all this into consideration, there is no doubt that neighbours and relatives seem more alien to one another than Italians or even Spaniards seemed to you when you stayed in Syria.<sup>95</sup>

Now that discord threatens the very heart of Christianity, it is time, Grotius argued, to record what

God's goodness has kept in tact for the Christians to this day; things which, by virtue of their being the greatest, the most certain and the most valuable, naturally mean so much to me that while I consider them, I put aside for the time being the other things which are of minor importance, less certain and less valuable. May these privileges, if I may call them that, at least prove to us that we are citizens of *one* community.<sup>96</sup>

First, it would be necessary to limit 'the number of necessary articles of faith to those few that are most self-evident'.<sup>97</sup> Minimizing the relevance of 'theoretical' doctrines for religion as such, Grotius went on to argue that Christianity delivers, above all, a superior *morality*. One of his best-known letters, addressed May 1615 to the French envoy at The Hague,<sup>98</sup> makes a similar distinction, which by now will sound only too familiar, between *philosophia contemplativa* and *philosophia practica*, arguing that the ultimate purpose of all science is to perform a moral and social task. In the *Meletius*, he also stresses the Senecan view that 'in every practical science the principles should be neither irrelevant nor redundant, but should either incite to action or to some extent make it clear what must be done and how it must be done.'<sup>99</sup> Yet Grotius' irenicism became increasingly hypothetical when in his *Ordinum pietas* (1613) he openly sided with such leading Remonstrants as Uytenbogaert, who translated this book into Dutch. The Counter-Remonstrant majority within Dutch

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<sup>95</sup> Grotius, *Meletius*, 103. Arthur Eyffinger will shortly edit another, even earlier manuscript of Grotius, dating from the early 1600s, revealing Grotius' youthful concern over the unity of the emerging Republic: 'Een te lang veronachtzaam juweeltje'.

<sup>96</sup> Grotius, *Meletius*, 104.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–134. See Posthumus Meyjes, 'Hugo Grotius as an Irenicist'; Lagrée, *La Raison ardente*; Edwin Rabbie, "'Nobis modica theologia sufficit'".

<sup>98</sup> Grotius, *Meletius*, 34–35; *Briefwisseling*, I, 384–387.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

Calvinism was far from delighted by this initiative. For Grotius was now arguing forcefully in favour of the submission of the church to the secular authorities, and thus sought to justify Oldenbarnevelt's policies along Erastian lines: 'for every individual is judge over his own religious conviction, the Church itself decides on the faith of the Church; but nobody has the right to decide on the faith of the Church inasmuch as it is public, except for him in whose hand and power all public bodies lie.'<sup>100</sup>

Grotius' correspondence from 1613 onwards shows him increasingly active on the side of the Remonstrants. By justifying the States' policies, raising support among the humanist élite of Leiden and Amsterdam, he constantly infuriated Calvinist orthodoxy.<sup>101</sup> Maurice's coup sealed his fate, and ironically showed the possible effects of the submission of the church to the secular authorities. Grotius, however, continued to reflect on possible ways to overcome religious and political strife. During his imprisonment he returned—in the company of his wife and a fine library—to his legal studies, which resulted, a few years after his escape in *De jure belli ac pacis* (1625). This time he stressed that he had kept the treatise as *abstract* as possible.<sup>102</sup> Despite this avowed break with his political past, there is every reason to regard Grotius' attempt to lay bare the foundations of a legal order which holds 'even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God',<sup>103</sup> as yet another attempt to find an answer to the increasing political chaos resulting from religious strife. From a European perspective, the Synod of Dordt and its ramifications were minor upheavals compared with the Thirty Years' War, which in 1618 was just about to begin, and which was closely monitored by the inhabitants of the Republic. At times when the early violence of the Revolt may have appeared dated, the atrocities committed in Germany served as a constant reminder of the horrors of war.<sup>104</sup>

In a sense, Grotius' new abstract approach reveals a concern very similar to his earlier work, for the law of nature, according to

<sup>100</sup> Grotius, *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas*, 189.

<sup>101</sup> See Nellen, *Hugo de Groot*, 15–33.

<sup>102</sup> Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres*, I, 29–30: 'If any one thinks that I have had in view any controversies of our own times, either those that have arisen or those which can be foreseen as likely to arise, he will do me an injustice. With all truthfulness I aver that, just as mathematicians treat their figures as abstracted from bodies, so in treating law I have withdrawn my mind from every particular fact.'

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 13.

<sup>104</sup> Spies and Wiskerke, 'Dutch Poets on the Thirty Years War'.

Grotius, 'is so common to all men that it does not admit of a distinction arising from religion.'<sup>105</sup> Although the actual presentation of 'that body of law (..) which is concerned with the mutual relations among states or rulers of states'<sup>106</sup> owes little if anything to Euclid's *Elements*, Grotius' recognition of the singular advantages of mathematics, confirms the apparent pre-eminence this particular discipline enjoyed at the time.<sup>107</sup> More important was the tendency, apparent in *De jure*, to widen the scope of 'mathematics'. During the early 1600s Grotius had actually written poetry celebrating Stevin's and Maurice's mathematical exercises. In another treatise, *De jure praedae*, written in 1604, but like the *Meletius* never published during his lifetime, Grotius did attempt to compose a genuinely 'mathematical' treatise on the law of nature. 'First let us see', Grotius wrote,

what is true universally as a general proposition: then, let us gradually narrow this generalization, adapting it to the special nature of the case under consideration. Just as the mathematicians customarily prefix to any concrete demonstration a preliminary statement of certain broad axioms on which all persons are easily agreed, in order that there may be some fixed point from which to trace the proof of what follows, so shall we point out certain rules and laws of the most general nature, presenting them as preliminary assumptions which need to be recalled rather than learned for the first time, with the purpose of laying a foundation upon which our other conclusions may safely rest.<sup>108</sup>

This procedure too, has rightly been presented as a major break with the Aristotelian distinction between theoretical and practical science.<sup>109</sup> Yet in the Dutch Republic, until the end of the Truce, the Aristotelian 'tradition' was still to be established. As a matter of fact, the appointment of Burgersdijk in Leiden in 1619, was a direct result of the National Synod of Dordt, which robbed the Leiden faculty of arts of all three of its professors of philosophy, who were suspected of Arminian leanings. Once the *philosophia recepta* had started to play its traditional role as the conceptual framework for academic teaching, it soon crumbled under the onslaught of the Utrecht and Leiden Cartesians, who by the second half of the century turned Cartesianism into the 'normal' academic philosophy. Grotius' reference to

<sup>105</sup> Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres*, II, 397. See Knieper, *Die Naturrechtslehre des Hugo Grotius*, 62 ff. See also Todescan, *Le radici teologiche del giusnaturalismo laico*.

<sup>106</sup> Grotius, *De iure belli ac pacis libri tres*, I, 9.

<sup>107</sup> Dufour, 'L'influence de la méthodologie des sciences physiques et mathématiques'; Vermeulen, 'Simon Stevin and the Geometrical Method'.

<sup>108</sup> Grotius, *De iure praedae commentarius*, I, 7.

<sup>109</sup> Tuck, 'Grotius and Selden', 505.

Euclid is to be understood not as an announcement of the Cartesian 'mathematization' of nature, but as a reflection of the particular expertise of a trading nation at war, which had learnt to appreciate the practical use of theory. Ironically, this essentially humanist attitude played a vital part in the Dutch reception of Descartes' *mathesis universalis*, which sealed the fate of humanism as a dominant intellectual force, not only in the Dutch Republic but also within the wider European history of ideas.

#### 4. *Academic Philosophy*

In 1648, when the Dutch Republic was internationally recognized as a sovereign state, it harboured a string of newly founded universities, some of which were rapidly acquiring a solid reputation. Leiden (1575), Franeker (1585), Groningen (1614), and Utrecht (1636) in particular would continue to draw substantial numbers of foreign students until well into the eighteenth century. The Republic also counted several prominent so-called 'Athenaea', or 'Illustrious Schools', which differed from the academies in that they lacked the right to bestow doctorates. The Athenaeum of Amsterdam, however, first established in 1632, managed to acquire an international reputation too, boasting first-class professors such as Caspar Barlaeus and Gerard Vossius. (Attempts were made to appoint the exiled Grotius to an Amsterdam chair, but this initiative apparently went too far.) The purpose of the universities and Athenaea alike was strictly practical. They were supposed to raise a class of indigenous professionals in the traditional subjects of theology, medicine and law. The courses in the corresponding 'higher' faculties of the universities, however, were supposed to be preceded by a course in the propedeutic faculty of arts, taking two to three semesters. For those who cared, however, it was possible to complete the entire *artes*-programme, by taking the title *magister artium*. At Leiden this qualification was only declared equivalent to a doctorate in one of the other faculties in 1631—a measure which reveals the uncertainty about the status of this degree. Between 1574 and 1650 it was only conferred 58 times.<sup>110</sup>

The majority of the professional philosophers in the Republic, as elsewhere in Europe, was made up of professors employed by the *artes*-faculties, which had chairs in logic, natural philosophy, moral

<sup>110</sup> Frijhoff, *La Société néerlandaise et ses gradués*, 40–43; Wansink, *Politieke wetenschappen aan de Leidse universiteit*, 24–36.

philosophy or ethics, and in some cases also in metaphysics, although the staff of the faculty of the theology in particular were quite suspicious of this discipline traditionally. In Franeker, for instance, the Ramist divine William Ames (1576–1633), campaigned against both moral philosophy and metaphysics as autonomous disciplines since he felt both were spurious besides theology.<sup>111</sup> In Leiden, on the other hand, it was due to the faculty of theology, that metaphysics was taken seriously from the early seventeenth century onwards.<sup>112</sup>

During the first few decades in which the Dutch academies were trying to find their identity, the status of philosophy as an academic subject was decidedly poor. In fact, very few students took the trouble to attend lectures, let alone take part in the disputations in philosophy. Apparently, students who had enrolled intent on becoming a minister took some interest in moral philosophy, aspiring physicians followed the occasional course in natural philosophy, while future lawyers felt some training in logic could do no harm. It goes without saying that all this disturbed many philosophy professors, who, incidentally received lower salaries than their colleagues in the higher faculties.<sup>113</sup> The immense prestige enjoyed by many colleagues such as Lipsius, Snellius and Heinsius in the *artes*-faculty, only made matters worse. Another indication of the poor state of philosophy at Leiden in the sixteenth century came in 1587. Justus Lipsius, about to accept his second term as rector, was charged by the curators to direct his attention especially to the study of philosophy. His suggestion, however, to establish three separate chairs for the subject was not realized until 1619.<sup>114</sup>

Until the 1620s, Leiden professors of philosophy were not very resourceful in marketing their professional expertise. Until 1598 no philosophy professor had bothered to publish anything at all. This failure to produce adequate textbooks clearly added to the malaise. As early as 1582, six Leiden students submitted a request to the senate to have the teaching of philosophy based on the writings of Aristotle,<sup>115</sup> but it was only after the installment of Franco Burgersdijk (1590–1635) in 1620 that this challenge was met.<sup>116</sup> For this former student of Leiden, called back from Saumur, set out to publish a

<sup>111</sup> Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames*, 79–83, 124–126 and 141–142.

<sup>112</sup> Dibon, *L'Enseignement philosophique*, 67.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 72 note 207.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 29. On Lipsius' ideas on the necessary changes to be implemented at Leiden, see Otterspeer, *Groepsportret met Dame I*, 168–176.

<sup>115</sup> Dibon, *L'Enseignement philosophique*, 12–14.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 90–107.

series of uniquely successful introductions to the various disciplines of Aristotelianism. In 1620 Burgersdijk was appointed to the chair of logic and ethics, from 1629 onwards he was professor in logic and physics. Immediately after his appointment, he set out to issue a series of manuals, including the *Idea philosophiae naturalis* (1622), the *Idea philosophiae moralis* (1623), the *Institutiones logicae* (1626), and the *Collegium physicum* (1632). Posthumously, his *Institutiones metaphysicae* (1640) was added to this remarkable list of firmly Aristotelian publications.

At this stage, it should, perhaps, be added that by the early seventeenth century Aristotle's writings were still regarded throughout Europe as containing a conceptual framework which served as the point of departure for the practice of science in general. At the universities in particular, Aristotelianism was commonly perceived as having acquired an *objective* status. In a sense, it was not considered the articulation of any particular philosophy, but as Philosophy as such. During the previous centuries it had proven to be capable of allowing for a startling intellectual variety. From the thirteenth century onwards, it had accommodated the theological preoccupations of Northern European scholars as well as the scientific interests of a long line of Italian 'naturalists'. It had produced textbooks *ad mentem Thomae* and *ad mentem Scoti*. From the early fifteenth century onwards, it had included the 'Ciceronian' Aristotelianism of Leonardo Bruni (c.1396–1444), attempts to purify the practice of Peripatetic logic by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c.1460–1536) and John Mayor (1467/9–1550), Pomponazzi's (1462–1525) and Zabarella's (1533–1589) move to natural philosophy as an autonomous intellectual enterprise, Francesco de Vitoria's (1483/92–1546) arguments against the barbaric treatment of Indians, and John Case's (c.1540–1600) eclectic adoption of the scheme of a *prisca theologia*. In fact, Charles B. Schmitt, after a life-time of studying Renaissance Aristotelianism, felt it necessary to distinguish eight different fifteenth- and sixteenth-century kinds of Aristotelianism.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, over the last few decades, it has become abundantly clear that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Aristotelianism, in Northern Italy in particular, contributed immensely to medicine and biology. Today, few historians would dare to uphold that during the Renaissance the development of science owed little to Aristotelianism.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Coppenhaver and Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 60–126. See also Grant, 'Ways to Interpret the Terms "Aristotelian" and "Aristotelianism"'.  
<sup>118</sup> Some titles: Randall, *The School of Padua and the Emergence of Modern Science*;

In view of Lipsius' success in moral philosophy, it will come as no surprise that during the early seventeenth century the Stoic philosophy of nature also enjoyed a revival. In a truly remarkable study of the way in which Dutch scholars reacted to the comets of 1577 and 1618, Tabitta van Nouhuys has convincingly shown to what extent at least elements of Stoic cosmology had been adopted by sixteenth-century Aristotelians, and how, during the early seventeenth century it was still generally held that genuine scientific discoveries consisted in the *recovery* of insights once held by the Greeks. Significantly, one of the early Dutch Copernicans, Philips Lansbergen (1561–1632) preferred heliocentrism not only because he believed it resulted in a more *beautiful* cosmology, which, as a consequence was better fitted to convey God's majesty, but also because it concurred with several passages in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (which was first translated into Dutch in 1607).<sup>119</sup>

Equally important has been the growing awareness of the progressive tendencies of early modern Aristotelianism. Its critics, including Descartes and Hobbes, actually embraced much of its inheritance. And for their part, several seventeenth-century Aristotelians did their best to absorb 'new' ideas into their own philosophy.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile, it very much remains to be seen what consequences should be drawn from the 'revisionist' tendency in the historiography of early modern philosophy, which, incidentally concentrates almost exclusively on the *French* context of Cartesianism. On the one hand it is quite clear that the 'new' philosophies of nature were themselves the outcome of debates that did not start with critics of Aristotle such as Descartes, who should probably be understood as the *last* major opponent of Scholasticism. And it seems only obvious

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Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* and *The Aristotelian Tradition and Renaissance Universities*; Wallace, *Galileo and his Sources*; Lohr, 'The Sixteenth-Century Transformation of the Aristotelian Natural Philosophy'; Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Modern Science*; Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>119</sup> Van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-Faced Janus*. See also Vermij, 'Waarom werd Philips Lansbergen Copernicaan?'

<sup>120</sup> Mercer, 'The Vitality and Importance of Early Modern Aristotelianism'. This insight has only recently reached Anglo-Saxon Descartes-scholarship: Garber, 'Descartes, the Aristotelians and the Revolution that Did not Happen in 1637'; Ariew, 'Descartes and Scholasticism' and *Descartes and the Last Scholastics*; Des Chene, *Physiologia*; Secada, *Cartesian Metaphysics*. There is, of course, a well-established French tradition in this respect, stretching from Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale* to Marion, *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes*. On Hobbes' dependence on Aristotelianism, see, most notably Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric* and Leijenhorst, *Hobbes and the Aristotelians*.



that even the fiercest critics of the Scholastic inheritance were heavily indebted to the very tradition they tried to terminate, if only because it supplied the terms that made a meaningful debate between ‘old’ and ‘new’ possible in the first place. By the same token, it simply cannot be denied, that during the seventeenth century, such vital areas as metaphysics, natural philosophy, and what we have come to perceive as the theory of knowledge, changed fundamentally.

The debates that set off these changes in the Netherlands hit the academies first. In a very real sense, the seventeenth-century protagonists of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ philosophies sought to establish an *orthodoxy* and the crucial fact about the Aristotelianism propounded by Burgersdijk seems to be its purely educational purpose. His books hardly convey articulate views on man, the world, or the divine; instead they describe and explain a conceptual vocabulary which had proved its mettle. This vocabulary had been rejuvenated in no small degree by generations of commentators—a process which was still going on in Burgersdijk’s day—and his most impressive achievement appears to have been his ability to bring his students up to date in this respect. The amount of sources that he drew on, without losing sight of the need to present systematic overviews, is truly impressive. In his *Metaphysics*, for example, he effortlessly introduced his students to the writings of the Coimbraenses, Suárez (1548–1617), Zabarella (1533–1589) and Pereyra (1535–1610), to name just a few. In the past, several experts have tried to make much of Burgersdijk’s metaphysics, which was perceived as a deliberate effort to create a Calvinist alternative both to the German *Schulmetaphysik* and to Suárez’ neo-Scholasticism.<sup>121</sup> Recent research suggests quite the opposite: despite the uneasiness in some Protestant quarters about Jesuit metaphysics—Dominican authors on the subject seem to have been more popular among Dutch Calvinists—, Burgersdijk acknowledged as quite natural the authority of the entire neo-Scholastic revival.<sup>122</sup>

As Mordechai Feingold has called him, Burgersdijk was indeed the ultimate pedagogue.<sup>123</sup> In particular his *Logic* was used for many decades in such universities as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and

<sup>121</sup> Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik*, 87–89; Dibon, *L’Enseignement philosophique*, 113–115; Robberts, ‘De Spaans-scholastieke wijsbegeerte’.

<sup>122</sup> Van Ruler, ‘Franco Petri Burgersdijk and the Case of Calvinism’; Krop, ‘Natural Knowledge of God in Neo-Aristotelianism’.

<sup>123</sup> Feingold, ‘The Ultimate Pedagogue’.

Yale.<sup>124</sup> His pedagogical intentions are confirmed by the remarkable fact that he managed to avoid being implicated in any public argument. Compared to the ferocious debates that had culminated in the Synod of Dordt, let alone to the upheavals caused shortly after he had passed away in 1635 by the introduction of Cartesianism, Burgersdijk's career is characterized by a disturbing lack of polemics. This can only be accounted for by taking recourse to the man's strictly didactical ambitions. Early in his career, some tension arose when in 1622 he published his *Institutiones philosophiae naturalis*. His colleague, the Scotsman Gilbert Jacchaeus (1578–1628), who at the time still held the chair for physics, was not amused. This, however, was an internal, administrative quarrel, that remained without consequences. In fact, the very nature of this incident only goes to confirm the didactical context in which Burgersdijk operated. For all his insistence on the necessity of following *method* in philosophy, the kind of method he envisaged was neither a method of discovery nor a method of proof, but one exclusively aimed at facilitating the understanding and retention of knowledge.<sup>125</sup>

It should be added that this type of practising philosophy did not die with Burgersdijk. Until well into the eighteenth century, several perfectly orthodox Aristotelians continued to publish all kinds of Peripatetic manuals, in which the rapidly growing opposition against the Aristotelian heritage was largely ignored. To such lesser known scholars as Arnold Verhel (1618–1664), professor at Franeker from 1618 to his death in 1664,<sup>126</sup> and Gisbert van Isendoorn (1601–1657), professor at the Athenaeum of Deventer and of the small academy of Harderwijk,<sup>127</sup> Aristotle remained the 'Prince of Philosophers'. Although several decades after its establishment at the Dutch academies Aristotelianism as a coherent philosophy was largely replaced by Cartesianism, Burgersdijk must be deemed a successful academic, as he played a key role in safeguarding the institutional status of Philosophy as a viable discipline. The fact that a real debate about 'old' and 'new' philosophy was about to take place in the Republic, was to a large degree thanks to him. Many of the antago-

<sup>124</sup> On his logic, see Van Reyen, 'Burgersdijk, Logician or Textbook Writer?'; Karskens, 'Subject, Object and Substance in Burgersdijk's Logic'.

<sup>125</sup> Reif, 'The Textbook Tradition in Natural Philosophy'.

<sup>126</sup> Dibon, *L'Enseignement philosophique*, 140–145; Galama, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs aan de hogeschool te Franeker*, 56–61.

<sup>127</sup> Dibon, *L'Enseignement philosophique*, 191–193; De Haan, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs aan het Gymnasium Illustre en de hogeschool te Harderwijk*, 45–54 and 'Geschiedenis van het wijsgerig onderwijs te Deventer', 58–74.

nists had actually been trained by Burgersdijk. Hence, it can come as no surprise that on occasion Burgersdijk's Cartesian successors were perfectly prepared to praise him for his academic professionalism.<sup>128</sup>

However, it should be stressed that from the earliest beginnings of the Dutch universities, Aristotle's authority had been questioned. Aristotle's natural philosophy in particular at no stage seems to have set the standard as it did, for example, in France. Whereas Burgersdijk's *Logic and Metaphysics* would be re-edited until the 1670s and the 1680s, his *Collegium physicum* was to have its last publication in 1650. In this text, consisting of 34 disputations, defended by his students in 1631, Burgersdijk presented a systematic exposition of the key notions of Aristotelian physics.<sup>129</sup> The most remarkable passages of this book deal with the revolution in astronomy that would, of course, finally destroy the coherence of the Aristotelian picture of the world. For Burgersdijk saw himself forced to abandon the notion of the incorruptability of the heavens.<sup>130</sup> Following Tycho Brahe's (1546–1601) and Galileo's (1564–1642) observations of new stars and of the surface of the moon, he had to admit that the fundamental divide between the regions below and above the moon could no longer be upheld. As Tabitta van Nouhuys has shown, by 1618 the Stoic notion of the essential unity of the cosmos had already been generally accepted.<sup>131</sup> In fact, among Dutch experts the Aristotelian world view only survived the sixteenth century to the extent that it concurred with the Stoic cosmology. Thus the common elements, including the geocentricity and the circularity of heavenly motion expounded by the two systems survived, but as soon as these were questioned, the Peripatetic inheritance got into serious trouble.

Once Burgersdijk went so far as to admit that Copernicus' heliocentric cosmology held many advantages over Ptolemy's cosmography, Aristotelianism had reached the limits of its otherwise remarkable flexibility. Astronomical innovations made the distinction

<sup>128</sup> Dibon, *L'Enseignement philosophique*, 91 note 33.

<sup>129</sup> See Ruestow, *Physics at Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Leiden*, 14–33; Petry, 'Burgersdijk's Physics'.

<sup>130</sup> Burgersdijk, *Collegium physicum*, 113: 'Utrum autem Ptolemaei hypotheses, solum terram immobilem statuentis, an Copernici veriores sint, terram annuo diurnoque motu moveri, et stellas fixas una cum sole quiescere asserentis, non est ita facile explicatu ...' For a discussion of scholastic views on the incorruptability of the heavens, see Grant, *Planets, Stars and Orbs*, 211–219 and 259–290. The same author deals with Scholastic attitudes towards the heliocentric system and the hypothesis of a daily axial rotation of the earth: 618 ff.

<sup>131</sup> Van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-Faced Janus*, Chapter 5.

between natural and artificial movement largely redundant and together with the growing uneasiness about the validity of a concept like 'substantial form' — crucial in the Aristotelian explanation of natural movement — the entire conception of movement of the Peripatetics gradually lost its cogency. Since natural philosophy constituted the very heart of Aristotelian philosophy, by the early seventeenth century, most *practitioners* of the natural sciences were looking for alternatives. Arguably the largest obstacle these *novatores* had to overcome, besides the institutional support for the *corpus Aristotelicum* in the European universities, was the general conception of Aristotelianism as being the articulation of 'common sense'. Its qualitative explanations for change and movement in general, tended to support the way people actually experienced the world in which they lived. For it argued that natural objects do *not* consist of unobservable atoms, for example. It also opposed, for instance, the supposition of a mysterious entity like a Platonic World Soul. It confirmed the intuitions of most men that the sun does revolve around the earth instead of the other way around. In a sense, Burgersdijk's greatest *philosophical* accomplishment may well have been his silencing of the Ramists in the Dutch Republic. But when he died in 1635, the seeds had been sown for yet another attempt to replace Aristotelianism. The supporters of the 'old' philosophy were to be called to the breaches once more.

CHAPTER TWO  
DUTCH CARTESIANISM

1. *Descartes and the Dutch*

When René Descartes (1596–1650) first visited the Republic, he was twenty-two years old.<sup>1</sup> As an officer of the States' army, he stayed in Breda for a year, where he made friends with Isaac Beeckman. After several restless years, spent wandering through Bohemia and Germany, and a brief but important stay at Paris during the mid-1620s, he returned to the Republic. On April 16, 1629 Descartes matriculated as a student of mathematics at Franeker, only to leave within several months, in order to try his luck at Leiden, where he enrolled under the rectorate of Burgersdijk. Early in 1630, he moved to Amsterdam, a city he had grown to like, after which, in May 1632, he settled in Deventer. Many of Descartes' travels are still a mystery, but the reasons for his move to Deventer are clear. One of his Dutch friends, one Henricus Reneri (1593–1639), only two years his senior, had just been appointed to the chair of philosophy at the local Athenaeum.<sup>2</sup> By this time, Descartes was working steadily on his own natural philosophy, yet *Le monde*, as this book was entitled, would never be published during his life-time, because of the shock Descartes experienced when at the end of 1633, news reached him of the condemnation of Galileo. Descartes greatly admired the Italian scientist, and for some time gave up all hope of ever publishing anything at all. In due time, however, he recovered, and when Reneri was called to take a chair at the newly established Athenaeum of Utrecht (1634), which in 1636 was to become a real university, he followed his friend a second time.<sup>3</sup> It was here that his ideas first began to

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, *Écrivains français en Hollande*; Dijksterhuis *et al.*, *Descartes et le cartésianisme hollandais*; Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*; Dibon, 'Le séjour de Descartes en Hollande'; McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands*; Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch* and *De wereld van Descartes*; Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality*. Recently two first-class biographies were published in English: Gaukroger, *Descartes* and Rodis-Lewis, *Descartes*.

<sup>2</sup> Verbeek, 'Henricus Reneri (1593–1639)'. See also Sassen, *Henricus Renerius*.

<sup>3</sup> Verbeek, *Une université pas encore corrompue*.

take root. Descartes' seventeenth-century biographer, Adrien Baillet actually wrote that Utrecht university seemed 'born Cartesian', since its first professor in philosophy started by interspersing his lectures with ideas derived from his French friend.<sup>4</sup>

Renieri's oration eloquently testified to the modernity of his approach. After having established that Aristotle's writings would serve as his point of departure, he announced private lectures to senior students, in which 'observations, problems and experiments' would be dealt with in a manner that had a decidedly Baconian ring. His scepticism with regards to man's ability to discover the real causes of natural phenomena, also points to a Baconian stance rather than to any affinity with Descartes. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon (1561–1626), who in the Netherlands was first read by Constantijn Huygens and Isaac Beeckman, was held in high regard by a surprising number of philosophers. Several of Bacon's works were translated into Dutch, including his *New Atlantis* and his *Essais*, but we still know little about the translators and their motives.<sup>5</sup> They may well have been inspired by the efforts of Comenius (1592–1670).<sup>6</sup> He visited the Republic on several occasions, in 1613, 1626 and 1642, when he encountered Descartes at Endegeest. Apparently, he had many influential admirers, who were impressed by the *Janua linguarum reserata* (1631), which was the manual he produced for the Latin Schools of Holland. During the early 1640s, together with Samuel Hartlib (c.1599–1661) and John Dury (1595–1680), he attempted to put into practice Bacon's project for the 'Advancement of Learning' by launching a co-ordinated effort to review British education, by establishing a scientific college, and by pacifying the warring factions within the Reformed tradition. Once the British isles were plunged into the chaos of the Civil War, Comenius felt that, for the moment, the Dutch Republic would serve as a more suitable candidate to embrace his schemes. But his plans to export *The Great Instauration* from Britain to the Continent do not seem to have made much impact, since he failed to clarify the philo-

<sup>4</sup> Baillet, *Vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes*, II, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Dibon, 'Sur la réception de l'oeuvre de F. Bacon en Hollande'; Bacon, *Het nieuwe Atlantis*, 33–35. See on Bacon: Jardine, *Francis Bacon*; Zagorin, *Francis Bacon*.

<sup>6</sup> See on Comenius in general: Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*; Webster, *The Great Instauration*; Popkin, 'The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought'. On the Dutch connection: Blekastad, *Comenius*, 171–175; Rood, *Comenius in the Low Countries*; Mout, 'Calvinoturcisme in de zeventiende eeuw.'; Van der Wall, *De mystieke chiliast Petrus Serrarius*, 87 ff, 257 ff, 467 ff, 605 ff; Frijhoff, 'Pieter de la Court and Comenius' Third Visit to Holland'.

sophical programme behind his efforts. Once he became involved in all sorts of theological quarrels over his millenarian schemes, he was soon forgotten.

As Theo Verbeek has argued, it may well have been the case that Descartes' criticism of Baconian empiricism in the sixth part of the *Discours de la méthode* (1637) was directly inspired by the views of Reneri.<sup>7</sup> One can be certain that Reneri was very well informed about Descartes' budding ideas on physics, and he appears to have made use of them in his lectures, before their author had published anything at all. Once the *Discours* had been published, in 1637 in Leiden, it was freely used in Reneri's lectures. This is remarkable, if only because Descartes' first publication was not written in Latin and most of its early readers were disappointed by the lack of detail provided by it.<sup>8</sup> Reneri suddenly died in 1639, and it was thus that the enthusiasm of another of Descartes' friends was to make history. His name was Henricus LeRoy, commonly known as Regius (1598–1697).<sup>9</sup> In 1638 this son of a prominent Utrecht family had been appointed to the medical faculty as professor of theoretical medicine and botany. After having studied at Groningen and at Padua, he first practiced as a physician and served as rector of a Latin School. His medical experience, combined with his educational expertise barely made up for his lack of diplomacy. His academic career was marred by various incidents. The first major battle he fought took place in 1641, when he took it upon himself to publish a series of disputations, several of which had nothing to do with medicine, let alone with botany. Regius suddenly felt the urge to defend Copernicanism and to declare that man is an 'ens per accidens'. Neither of these two issues was particularly topical. Copernicanism had already been embraced by Stevin and we have seen that Burgersdijk felt perfectly free to discuss its advantages. Regius' stance on the latter issue, which implied a denial of the Aristotelian 'substantial forms' should not have been cause for great concern either, because by the first half of the century many natural philosophers had come to agree that it was not a very helpful notion at all.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Verbeek, 'Henricus Reneri', 132–134. See also Sassen, *Henricus Renenius*, 20–30.

<sup>8</sup> Verbeek, *Une université pas encore corrompue*, 11; Dibon, 'La réception du *Discours de la Méthode* dans les Provinces Unies'.

<sup>9</sup> See on Regius in general: De Vrijer, *Henricus Regius*; Dechange, *Die frühe Naturphilosophie des Henricus Regius*; Rotschuh, 'Henricus Regius und Descartes'. On his involvement with Descartes, see Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, II, 132–201; Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, *passim* and 'Regius's *Fundamenta physices*'.

<sup>10</sup> Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 9–10. See also Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality*,

And yet the rector of the Utrecht university was furious. He was under no delusion as to who had inspired Regius to pose suddenly as a natural philosopher, for Descartes' views were rapidly becoming the talk of the town. Not only had the *Meditations* (1641) now actually been published, a curious incident also alerted the rector. The professor of History, Antonius Aemilius (1589–1666) dedicated his oration at Reneri's funeral largely to the genius of the French friend of the deceased. By the early 1640s, the entire academic community of Utrecht must have been aware of Descartes' presence. A number of professors expected great things of the Frenchman. The newly appointed rector, however, felt differently. It was Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), professor of theology and, more importantly, a minister of great renown and moral prestige within the Calvinist community of the Dutch Republic, who had been appointed.<sup>11</sup> As a former student of Burgersdijk, and the youngest member of the Synod of Dordt, who had for some time already been worried about the growing resistance to the *philosophia recepta*, he was a formidable opponent indeed. In 1635 he had made it quite clear that as far as he was concerned, Copernicanism was theologically unacceptable since it directly contradicted such crucial biblical passages as *Joshua* 10:12–14, *Ecclesiastes* 1:4–7 and *Psalms* 19:5–7. Since the interpretation of these texts belonged exclusively to the professional competence of theologians, astronomers simply had no say in the matter.<sup>12</sup> He was not opposed to natural philosophy as such. In 1636, in a sermon delivered at the opening of the university, he had endorsed the natural sciences, which after all, he argued, help us grasp God's majesty.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Voetius seems to have been quite fascinated by medicine. He was simply not interested in the practice of philosophy for its own sake, and held the opinion that it had the strictly propedeutical task of preparing students for their courses in the higher faculties.

He reacted to Regius by publishing an *Appendix* in which he portrayed Descartes' natural philosophy as one of the most dangerous exponents of the 'new' philosophy, which was threatening to overturn the authority of Aristotle.<sup>14</sup> He argued that both Descartes'

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199ff.

<sup>11</sup> On Voetius, see Duker, *Gisbert Voetius*; Van Oort *et al* (red.) *De onbekende Voetius*; Van Lieburg, *De Nadere Reformatie in Utrecht*.

<sup>12</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 114–115. See also Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality*, 11–20.

<sup>13</sup> Voetius, *Sermoen van de Nuttighejdt der Academien ende Scholen*.

<sup>14</sup> Its full title: *Appendix ad corrolaria Theologica-Philosophica nuperae disputationi de Iubeleo Romano*. See the French translation in Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*,



Copernicanism and his denial of substantial forms were directly opposed to Scripture itself and to the well established tradition of Aristotelian philosophy. Consequently, he concluded, Cartesianism had to be wrong. By insisting on the combined authority of Scripture and Aristotle, however, Voetius was reinventing a highly specific tradition within the Peripatetic inheritance, namely the so-called '*Physica Mosaïca*' of Lambert Danaeus (1530–1595).<sup>15</sup> The rector drew heavily on Danaeus' *Physica Christiana* (1576), according to which the book of *Genesis* was perfectly clear in stating that God at the act of Creation had bestowed 'substantial forms' to matter, which as a consequence express His Grace and obey His intentions. According to Voetius, Moses in the Bible clearly affirms the creation of separate *species*.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, we cannot do without the substantial forms of individual objects, since they account for the particular species to which these objects belong. Because they constitute the 'real qualities' of individual substances, which make up the internal cause of natural movement, they cannot be dispensed with when explaining movement. By eliminating the concept of substantial forms and by reducing all movement to *external* causes, Voetius argued, Descartes had managed to destroy the very notion of causality as such. In short, Voetius opined that Cartesian mechanicism was only able to describe the conditions under which movement became possible. It did not, however, explain any actual movement.<sup>17</sup>

Probably both Regius and Descartes at this stage seriously underestimated Voetius' willingness to uphold his resistance to the 'new' philosophy in general, and Cartesianism in particular. In February 1642, Regius published an acid *Responsio* to Voetius' *Appendix*, in which he complained of the jealousy that had obviously inspired the Utrecht rector to treat his friend so harshly.<sup>18</sup> Within a few weeks, however, on March 17, 1642 the university officially prohibited Cartesianism. It was condemned for being contrary to the old philosophy, for impeding the courses taught at the higher faculties, and for producing a number of 'absurdities'.<sup>19</sup> This time Descartes reacted

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105–115.

<sup>15</sup> Fatio, *Méthode et théologie*.

<sup>16</sup> Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality*, 26–27 and 37 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 105–111. See Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality*, 172–177; Verbeek, *De wereld van Descartes*, 67–74.

<sup>18</sup> Regius, *Responsio sive Notae in Appendicem*.

<sup>19</sup> Kernkamp (red.) *Acta et decreta Senatus*, I, 170–174; Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 121–122.

himself, feeling the victim of a personal vendetta.<sup>20</sup> He added a *Lettre à Dinet* to the second, Amsterdam edition of the *Meditations*, in which he concentrated on ridiculing Voetius' character, without bothering to address Voetius' philosophical observations. It goes without saying that Voetius became very angry indeed, but he left it to a former student of his to strike back, and Martin Schoock (1614–1669), who had been appointed to a chair in philosophy at Groningen two years earlier, certainly did. Even to seventeenth-century standards, Schoock's *Admiranda methodus novae philosophicae Renati Des-Cartes*, published in 1643, was an uncommonly aggressive piece of work.<sup>21</sup> Despite a number of bizarre observations on Descartes' life-style—the Frenchman was portrayed as a drunkard and a whoremonger<sup>22</sup>—this first substantial reaction to Cartesianism did contain a serious analysis of both the *Discours* and the *Meditations*.<sup>23</sup>

Firstly Schoock questioned the scientific suitability of systematic doubt. According to Schoock, the advice to concentrate on clear and distinct ideas, implied a thoroughly unwholesome subjectivism, which was fundamentally at odds with the common practice within the scientific community. No scientist, Schoock argued, could afford to dispel the judgement of his peers in the way Descartes had done in the *Discours*. It can be no coincident, Schoock continued, that Descartes' 'metaphysical meditations' were hardly to be distinguished from the equally unsavoury ravings of so-called 'enthusiasts'.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, he argued that Cartesianism would certainly lead to scepticism and atheism. It would lead to atheism because it replaced the traditional proofs of the existence of God by highly questionable ones: the ontological proof, adopted in the fifth meditation, has always been treated with suspicion, and rightly so, whereas Descartes' proof in the third meditation is plainly flawed. For Schoock it was impossible to deduce God's existence from the fact that we have a clear and distinct idea of His essence, which can only be caused by Him, for the simple reason that no such clear and distinct idea is available. Not after the Fall, in any case.<sup>25</sup> Cartesianism, Schoock continued,

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Descartes, *Verantwoordingh van Renatus Descartes*, 82 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 135–320.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>23</sup> Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 20–23; Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality*, 172–198.

<sup>24</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 312–314. Cf. 195, 200, 205, 255 and Heyd, 'Descartes—An Enthusiast *malgré-lui*'.

<sup>25</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 270–276 and 315–317. See also Schoock, *De scepticismo*, 145–151.

also leads to scepticism, since it demands too much from the scientist. Instead of striving for mathematical certainty, he should content himself with the probable certainty supplied by the senses.<sup>26</sup> Finally Schoock agreed with Voetius' assessment of Descartes' mechanistic inability to explain the occurrence of actual movement, and concluded that Cartesianism was nothing but an empty promise, and a dangerous promise at that.<sup>27</sup> Unless we silence the wanton arrogance of this new philosopher quickly, Schoock predicted, his followers will start to question the authority of the biblical authors as well.<sup>28</sup>

Almost immediately after the publication of the *Admiranda methodus*, Descartes issued his *Epistola ad Voetium* (1643), addressed to the Utrecht magistrate. He was convinced that Voetius was responsible for this attack on his method and metaphysics, and now tried to reduce the issue to the latter's incorrigible argumentativeness. To prove his point he delved deep into Voetius' personal history, which gave him plenty of opportunity to portray his detractor as a man who thrived on quarrels. Remarkably, however, Descartes refused to discuss the arguments that had been put forward against his 'new' philosophy. At no stage in the continuing controversy with his Dutch critics did he see fit to debate his views at any length. Instead he appealed to the civic authorities. He sent two copies of his letter to the Utrecht magistrate. And he also contacted the French ambassador in the Republic, the Marquis Gaspard Coignet de la Thuillerie, who in turn appealed to the Stadholder. Following this, Frederick Henry forced the Utrecht authorities to silence Schoock, who was about to publish a pamphlet, revealing his sole responsibility for the *Admiranda methodus*. Encouraged by this success, Descartes, early in 1645 addressed the ambassador once more, asking him to convince the senate of Groningen university to make Schoock admit that it was Voetius who had pushed him to compose the attack on Cartesianism. This was a clever move, because at the time the Groningen rectorate was held by the theologian Samuel Maresius (1599–1673). Maresius was a bitter enemy of Voetius, and therefore always happy to have his own at the Utrecht divine. On April 10, 1645 Schoock issued a declaration in which he admitted that his former teacher had indeed put him up against the Frenchman. Apparently, this was more than Voetius could take, for a bitter controversy ensued between master

<sup>26</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 307–311. Schoock, *De scepticismo*, 201–245 contains an elaborate defense of empiricism.

<sup>27</sup> Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 281–287.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

and former pupil in which Voetius actually managed to get Schoock arrested for slander.<sup>29</sup>

By 1645, Descartes had every reason to be cheerful. For not only had he succeeded in destroying the alliance between Voetius and Schoock, in 1644 he had finally published his *Principia Philosophiae*,<sup>30</sup> and at Leiden university his views were beginning to attract a following. It was at this time that Burgersdijk's successor as professor of logic, Adriaan Heereboord (1614–1661) to the delight of his students started to pay attention to Cartesianism in his lectures.<sup>31</sup> But also in Leiden orthodox theologians and Aristotelian philosophers took offence. Both the theologians Jacob Revius (1586–1658) and Jacob Trigland (1583–1654), and the Scottish professor of metaphysics Adam Stuart (1591–1654) had no intention of letting Heereboord have his way. Revius was the first Leiden critic to raise his voice against this new philosophy publicly, in a series of disputations held in February and March 1647.<sup>32</sup> He severely condemned Cartesian doubt in particular.

But Descartes also had many friends in Leiden, including the professor of mathematics and oriental languages Jacob Golius (1596–1667). And, more importantly, he was well acquainted with the famous Calvinist minister Abraham Heidanus (1597–1678), who during the 1630s had acted as one of the most influential opponents of the Remonstrants.<sup>33</sup> Here was a theologian, whose reformed orthodoxy was beyond doubt, who was seriously interested in Cartesian philosophy, and who, in 1648, would be appointed to a Leiden chair in theology. It was Heidanus who informed Descartes on Revius' disputations, after which Descartes, on May 4, 1647 addressed a very detailed letter to the curators of Leiden university, inquiring whether they were aware of the fact that his good name was being tarnished by Revius and his colleague Trigland.<sup>34</sup> On May 20 the curators summoned Revius and Heereboord, ordering them to keep quiet and to refrain from future comments on the philosophy of Descartes.<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>29</sup> Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 30–31; Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, 240–282. Recently, several newly found letters from the correspondence of Voetius have decidedly broadened our understanding of the controversy between Voetius and Schoock: Bos en Broeyer, 'Epistolarium Voetianum' and Bos, 'Epistolarium Voetianum II'.

<sup>30</sup> See Verbeek, 'Les *Principia* dans la culture néerlandaise'.

<sup>31</sup> Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 34–51.

<sup>32</sup> Revius, *Analectorum theologorum Disputationes*.

<sup>33</sup> See Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*.

<sup>34</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, III, 316–317; *Oeuvres*, V, 1–15.

<sup>35</sup> Molhuysen (red.) *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche universiteit*, III, 5–6.

French philosopher, however, wanted Revius and Trigland to apologize to him, but although he once more made sure that the French embassy contacted the Stadholder, no apologies were offered. Instead, Revius continued his campaign, publishing early in December a highly detailed attack on Descartes' method and metaphysics.<sup>36</sup> Adam Stuart on his part announced a disputation on Cartesian philosophy, to be held on December, 23.

Unfortunately, we no longer have the text of this disputation, but Heereboord wrote an account of what took place, and to all intents and purposes, it became an exciting morning in the Leiden academy at the Rapenburg. The place was packed and Revius had the bad luck that one of his respondents was Johannes de Raey (1622–1702), a former student of Regius and Heereboord, who as a medical doctor and master of arts at Leiden gave private lectures in natural philosophy. One of Stuart's theses he was to counter, put it that

There are certain new-fangled philosophers [*neoterici*] who deny that the senses can in any way be trusted and claim that philosophers can deny that there is a God and that one can doubt His existence, and at the same time hold that there are in the human mind actual notions, images or ideas about God, which are naturally inborn.<sup>37</sup>

De Raey's offensive was as simple as it was effective: either such philosophers do not exist, in which case it is pointless to discuss their views, or, he argued, they do exist, in which case we should be told whom we are dealing with. Stuart took the bait by insisting that he had been forbidden by the curators to name the philosophers in question, but that everybody knew whom he was talking about. At this point De Raey dryly commented that, apparently, Stuart was breaching the rules already, since the curators had prohibited not only to mention his name, but also to discuss his ideas. Stuart got nervous, and wondered aloud whether De Raey had any idea what he was talking about. He had not been present when the curators had taken their decision, but Revius had, so perhaps De Raey should want Revius to enlighten him on the matter? Then, De Raey turned to Heereboord. He had been present, so perhaps he could confirm that they were, in fact, discussing the views of Descartes? At this stage, Stuart exploded with anger, crying out that De Raey should be silent, upon which a huge row broke out. The students created such an uproar that the session had to be cancelled.

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<sup>36</sup> Revius, *Methodi cartesianae consideratio theologica*.

<sup>37</sup> Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 48.

By this time, it was clear that action had to be taken. The new Stadholder, William II personally intervened, calling for an end to the rumour. The curators, however, preferred to continue their politics of non-intervention. During the first few months of 1648 a number of pamphlets appeared, but far more interesting was Adriaan Heereboord's decision to mobilize his popularity among the student population. On January 13, he held a public lecture entitled *De recte philosophice disputandi ratione*. In an appendix to the published text he added an open letter to the curators in which he once more praised Descartes' genius. Now, on February 8, 1648 the curators invited Heereboord, Revius, De Raey and a number of students, including one Pieter de la Court (1618–1685) who had been involved in a fight over a disputation, and solemnly repeated their decision of May the year previously to confine the teaching of Philosophy to Aristotelianism.<sup>38</sup>

Again, Descartes felt deeply offended, but there were other worries that kept him busy. To his annoyance, he had begun to realize that his own following refused to pay any attention to the original intentions of his philosophy. As early as 1645, when he had studied the manuscript of Regius' *Fundamenta physices* (1646), he had found it hard to believe his eyes. His first real pupil was abandoning Cartesian orthodoxy even before it had been properly established. Regius, for example, showed no interest whatsoever in metaphysics, largely ignored Descartes' methodology, rejected innate ideas, and was well on his way towards formulating a highly uncartesian, that is materialist view of the soul, which according to Regius was no more than a 'mode' of the body.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that Regius changed several passages at Descartes' request, he wrote a preface to the first edition of 1646 in which he stated that although many of his views had been inspired by Descartes, he was his own man. Descartes furiously added a preface to the French translation of the *Principa* (1647), in which he frankly accused his former friend of plagiarism. Regius in turn rewrote his chapter on man from the *Fundamenta*, and issued it separately,<sup>40</sup> after which Descartes chastized the Utrecht professor in his *Notae in programma quoddam*<sup>41</sup> — an extremely violent

<sup>38</sup> Molhuysen (red.) *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche universiteit*, III, 14–19.

<sup>39</sup> Sloan, 'Descartes, the Sceptics, and the Rejection of Vitalism'; Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 52 ff and 'Regius's *Fundamenta physices*'.

<sup>40</sup> Regius, *Explicatio mentis humanis*, reprinted in Descartes' *Notae in programma quoddam: Oeuvres*, VIII-2, 342–346.

<sup>41</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, I, 307–308; *Oeuvres*, IX-2, 19–20. See Verbeek, 'Le contexte historique des *Notae in programma quoddam*'.

pamphlet which was promptly answered by a further *Explicatio* of Regius.<sup>42</sup> What is more, Voetius had almost simultaneously issued his *Disputationes theologicae selectae*, packed with references to the dangers of Cartesianism, triggering Descartes to publish his *Lettre apologétique aux magistrat d'Utrecht* (1648). This extremely detailed account of the various quarrels he had been dragged into can be read as his farewell to the Dutch Republic, which he left in the Autumn of 1649, heading for Stockholm.

## 2. *The Rise of Dutch Cartesianism*

Although Descartes occasionally praised Dutch tolerance, he does not seem to have understood how it actually worked.<sup>43</sup> For, despite the official declarations condemning his views, the university authorities did next to nothing to uphold their decrees. Both in Utrecht and Leiden Cartesianism spread rapidly. It has been argued that the appointment, in 1641, of Paul Voet (1619–1667) to the Utrecht chair of metaphysics and his succession in 1652 by his brother Daniel (1629–1660), goes to show that the introduction of Cartesianism at Utrecht was a failure.<sup>44</sup> But in 1652 the Cartesian Johannes de Bruyn (1620–1675) became professor of physics and mathematics. After this he was to hold the chair of theoretical philosophy together with Daniel Voet. Furthermore, in 1656 Paul Voet moved to the faculty of law and four years later, when his brother Daniel suddenly died, he was succeeded by the liberal Cartesian, Regnerus van Mansvelt (1639–1671), despite Gisbert Voetius' request to the rector that a representative of the 'old' philosophy be appointed to the chair formerly held by his son.<sup>45</sup> In 1662 and 1664 even the Utrecht faculty of theology appointed admirers of Descartes, such as Frans Burman (1628–1679) and Louis Wolzogen (1633–1690). Regius too would continue to lecture at Utrecht until his death in 1679.

On the whole, the Utrecht response to Cartesianism was highly diplomatic. By dividing chairs between supporters of the 'old' and the 'new' philosophy, it created a balance and forestalled radicalisation. It ensured that the university kept more or less in line

<sup>42</sup> Regius, *Brevis explicatio mentis humanae sive animae rationis*.

<sup>43</sup> See Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, I, 31–32; *Oeuvres*, I, 202–204. Cf. De Vrijer, *Henricus Regius*, 44 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Van Berkel, 'Descartes in debat met Voetius'.

<sup>45</sup> McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands*, 32–33.

with the international tradition and at the same time was receptive to innovation. Most Dutch academies followed this example. In Groningen, in 1667, for instance, the faculty of arts appointed the Cartesian Lammers together with the Aristotelian Bertling.<sup>46</sup> At Franeker, the Aristotelian Verhel taught from 1618 to 1664 (!), first next to the Ramist Ames, subsequently to the Cartesian Johannes Greidanus (1633–1668), who would also be succeeded by Cartesians.<sup>47</sup> Even at Groningen, where Schoock held sway, Cartesianism was privately taught by Tobias Andreae (1604–1676), a personal friend of Descartes, who was professor of Greek and Mathematics from 1635 onwards. Schoock was furious about these *privatissima*, but his increasingly eccentric behaviour—he was implicated in several financial scandals—did not enhance his authority.<sup>48</sup> In 1667 Gerhard Lammers (1641–1719) became the first ‘official’ Cartesian at Groningen.<sup>49</sup> At the university of Harderwijk, in 1658, the Aristotelian Gisbert van Isendoorn was also succeeded by a Cartesian.<sup>50</sup>

By far the most important university in the country, meanwhile, was, of course, Leiden. In spite of the repeated claim by the curators that the *corpus Aristotelicum* should serve as the point of departure in Philosophy, Leiden university was to become largely dominated by Descartes’ new philosophy. In 1648 the curators actually appointed Abraham Heidanus to a chair in theology. Two years later Heidanus made sure that the faculty was strengthened by the arrival of the German Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669) who was to inspire a highly influential Cocceio-Cartesian alliance that was to endure until well into the next century.<sup>51</sup> A whole string of Cartesian appointments was to follow: in 1653 Stuart’s chair in physics was awarded to Johannes de Raey and in 1658 the Cartesian physician François de le Boë Sylvius (1614–1672) became professor of medicine. In the same year the Louvain Cartesian Arnout Geulincx (1625–1669) moved to Leiden, starting there by giving private lectures and finally being appointed to a chair in philosophy in 1665.<sup>52</sup> In 1664 De le Boë

<sup>46</sup> Van Ruler, ‘Het anti-cartesianisme van Johannes Bertling’.

<sup>47</sup> Galama, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs aan de hogeschool te Franeker*, 1–131; Dibon, *L’Enseignement philosophique*, 128–163.

<sup>48</sup> Thijsen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, 164–193.

<sup>49</sup> De Mowbray, ‘*Libertas philosophandi*’.

<sup>50</sup> De Haan, *Het wijsgerig onderwijs aan het Gymnasium Illustre en de Hogeschool te Harderwijk*, 1–68.

<sup>51</sup> Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 31–33. See also Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, II, 202–270.

<sup>52</sup> See Malbreil, ‘L’occasionalisme d’Arnold Geulincx’; Cooney, ‘A. Geulincx’; Hubbeling, ‘Arnout Geulincx’; Rousset, *Geulincx entre Descartes et Spinoza*.



Sylvius was accompanied at the university by his former pupil Florentius Schuyl (1619–1669), who two years later would publish the first edition of Descartes' *De Homine*.<sup>53</sup> Six years later, Schuyl was succeeded by the Cartesian philosopher and physician Theodorus Craanen (1620–1690). The physicist and mathematician Burchard de Volder (1643–1709) was appointed in the same year and he too was a dedicated follower of Descartes. In 1671 the Cartesian theologian Christopher Wittichius (1625–1687) was called to Leiden. The brilliant Aristotelian Gerard de Vries (1648–1705) in 1674 preferred to decline a generous offer to join the Leiden *artes*-faculty, because he did not want to be made fun of. He stayed in Utrecht, where pestering Peripatetics had not become the favourite pastime of students and professors.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from the obvious fact that Descartes could count on a number of influential friends in Leiden just as he could in Utrecht, the success Cartesianism enjoyed at Leiden can be traced back to three different factors. The first of these was the curious eclecticism propounded by the popular Heereboord, secondly the separation between philosophy and theology, executed by prominent reformed theologians such as Heidanus and Wittichius, and thirdly the appeal of Descartes' mathematics to the indigenous professors and students of the *School voor Nederduytsche Mathematique*, set up by Simon Stevin in 1600. As far as Adriaan Heereboord is concerned, it should be noted beforehand that he was a rather erratic ally to say the least, if only because of his unruly conduct both inside and outside the classroom. He must have been a source of embarrassment not only to his fellow-Cartesians but to the entire academic community. Besides a very popular professor with his students, the man appears to have been a drunk and a brute.

In The Hague, in 1648, a broadsheet appeared, defending the honour of Heereboord's housewife.<sup>55</sup> Mrs. Heereboord was *née* De la Court, a sister of Pieter, one of Heereboord's students who campaigned in favour of Cartesianism. The De la Courts were rich textile merchants, belonging to the local Leiden patriciate, and when Johanna de la Court married the professor in December 1646, her parents were so good as to take care of their son-in-law's debts—

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<sup>53</sup> Lindeboom, *Florentius Schuyl*.

<sup>54</sup> Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, 227–228; Dibon, *L'Enseignement philosophique*, 194–219; De Pater, 'Experimental Physics'.

<sup>55</sup> Van Vloten, 'Adriaan Heereboord'; Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, 114–120.

8,000 guilders in total. The financial state of professor Heereboord, subregent of the *Statencollege* at Leiden, should perhaps have held out a warning, for Johanna was soon to discover that her learned husband 'at night secretly slipped down the stairs in order to goggle down the sweet wine he kept in a barrel.'<sup>56</sup> He hid his bottles behind the books of his library, or so the rumour went. On one occasion he got so sick that he vomitted all over his wife's bed. The unhappy marriage ended when Heereboord, on April 19, 1648 literally threw his pregnant wife out of their house. Three months later she gave birth to a son who died that same day, and Heereboord was not even allowed to have a look at his child before the coffin was closed.<sup>57</sup> He begged forgiveness in a pamphlet on 'the Honour and Life' of himself, but this pathetic gesture did not endear him to his family-in-law.<sup>58</sup> In fact, he seems to have persisted in his erratic behaviour, for shortly before his death it was reported to the church-council that 'he daily staggered drunk through the streets, to the great embarrassment of others'.<sup>59</sup>

Despite his personal shortcomings—Heereboord was not the only Leiden professor who drank heavily<sup>60</sup>—, he seems to have been very popular with his students, probably because he continued to uphold the *libertas disputandi*, arguing ceaselessly that philosophy is an exclusively rational enterprise, and that reason requires freedom.<sup>61</sup> As Verbeek has emphasized, Heereboord actually regarded disputes as a means for finding truth. In a lecture (1648) 'on the right way to hold philosophical disputations', Heereboord remarked:

Disputation is the sieve and, as it were, the whetstone of truth; it enhances the mind, it sharpens judgement, it arouses both; it improves memory and furthers the freedom of speech. And as fire comes from the contact of two flints, truth arises from disputations.<sup>62</sup>

In itself this is, of course, a very unc cartesian piece of reasoning, ideally suited however, to academic practice. One could also say that Heereboord was only able to take this stance, by evading more fun-

<sup>56</sup> De la Court, *Factum ofte gherechtigheydt*, n.p.

<sup>57</sup> *Graf-Dicht op den ongesiene Isaak Heereboord*.

<sup>58</sup> *Naachte ende Nodige Verantwoordingh*.

<sup>59</sup> Van Vloten, 'Adriaen Heereboord', 102.

<sup>60</sup> Grafton, 'Civic Humanism and Scientific Scholarship', 65; Otterspeer, *Groepsportret met Dame I*, 310–314.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Molhuysen (red.) *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche universiteit*, II, 275: students had petitioned that he be allowed to preside over disputations before he was appointed lector.

<sup>62</sup> Verbeek, 'Tradition and Novelty', 188.

damental choices as to the *contents* of competing philosophies. His posthumously published *Philosophia naturalis* (1663) in particular reveals his failure to break loose from Scholasticism.<sup>63</sup> He would not accept, for instance, the Cartesian identification of matter with extension, nor Descartes' integration of physics into mathematics. His commitment to mechanism was at best dubious and his understanding of motion was still basically teleological. His comments on Descartes' and Regius' insistence that the sun was the centre of the universe are decidedly ambiguous as well. The entire debate over heliocentrism does not seem to have interested him particularly. As E.G. Ruestow has put it, it may well have been 'that the stimulating disruptiveness of his presence at Leiden lay not in the modernity of his own philosophy but in the struggle to secure an open market place of ideas within the university.'<sup>64</sup>

Probably Heereboord's views on the history of philosophy provide the best clue to his intentions.<sup>65</sup> He first spoke about these views in 1641, during an oration. He had been appointed to a special chair for logic and although the text of this oration has been lost, Heereboord quoted from it in his *Epistola ad curatores* (1648), which was subsequently printed in his main work, the *Meletemata* (1654). Heereboord presented Aristotle as the natural philosopher *par excellence*. The essential agreement between his 'old' philosophy and the work being done by such *novatores* as Dante, Petrarch, Agricola, Erasmus, Luther, Melancton, Gorlaeus, Patrizzi, Basso, Bacon, Comenius and Descartes, according to Heereboord, consisted indeed of the awareness that the investigation of nature constituted the proper business of philosophy. According to Heereboord, the novelty of the 'new' philosophy propounded by all these authors consisted in the attempt to *reform* philosophy in the sense that it should return to its *original* task. He concluded his oration thus:

Finally let us shake the dust from our eyes, and let us not cling to one Aristotle; let us enter the school not only of Aristotle, but also of Nature; let us open the manuscript not only of Aristotle, but also Nature; and especially let us unfold the pages not only of the former, but also of the latter. Moreover, so that I may put before you in one word the true reason for philosophizing, let us adore the very nature of things, let us seek there the causes; let us observe the discoveries; and let us test

<sup>63</sup> Heereboord, *Philosophia naturalis*. See Ruestow, *Physics at Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Leiden*, 48–58.

<sup>64</sup> Ruestow, *Physics at Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Leiden*, 58.

<sup>65</sup> Malusa, 'The "Historica Philosophica" in the Culture of the Low Countries'. See also Krop, 'Scholae naturae ingrediamur.'

after observing by other experiments and having tested, let us refer and apply them to the use of human life; and thus in Nature, let us celebrate, know, and admire the best, most powerful, and wisest artisan of nature.<sup>66</sup>

Curious as it may seem, Heereboord in this fashion actually presented Descartes as a more faithful 'Aristotelian' than the so-called Aristotelians opposing the French philosopher. Heereboord's humanist eclecticism on the one hand stood in a well-established Dutch tradition, on the other it paved the way for a generation of philosophers who could afford a more principled, that is a more definite choice in favour of the 'new' philosophy that had hit Dutch academe. From a professional point of view, Heereboord's insistence on the continuity between the old and new philosophies of nature was perfectly intelligible. In spite of the revolutionary pathos characterising the *Discours de la méthode*, on occasion Descartes was also prepared to be more circumspect. In his *Letter to Dinet* of 1642, he observed that 'everything in peripatetic philosophy, regarded as a distinctive school that is different from others, is quite new, whereas everything in my philosophy is old.'<sup>67</sup>

However, before Descartes' philosophy of nature could take over the way in which the discipline was being taught at university level, first, Voetius', Schoock's and Revius' objections to its unbiblical nature had to be countered. Descartes himself did not particularly enjoy addressing theological matters. In the sixth *Responsiones* he declared 'never' to interfere in theology, unless for purely private reasons.<sup>68</sup> Although he did, of course, stress the apologetical thrust of his *Meditations*, in the *Principia* he went out of his way to emphasize that to his mind, philosophy and theology should be kept strictly separated. When and if God's Revelation surpasses our understanding, we are best advised simply to believe Him.<sup>69</sup> In 1642 he wrote to Dinet never wishing to interfere in theological controversies.<sup>70</sup> As early as 1630 he had told Mersenne precisely the same.<sup>71</sup> In the second *Replies* to the *Meditations*, however, he appeared to subscribe to a well-defined hermeneutical tradition, writing:

<sup>66</sup> Malusa, 'The "Historica Philosophica" in the Culture of the Low Countries', 220.

<sup>67</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, II, 391; *Oeuvres*, VII, 580. For Schoock's commentary, see Verbeek (éd.) *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 211–215.

<sup>68</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, II, 289; *Oeuvres*, VII, 429.

<sup>69</sup> *Principia* I, 25; Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, II, 201; cf. 221; *Oeuvres*, VIII-1, 14 and 39. See Gouhier, *La Pensée religieuse de Descartes*, 197 ff.

<sup>70</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, II, 394; *Oeuvres*, VII, 598.

<sup>71</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, I, 24–25 and 137; *Oeuvres*, I, 150; cf. II, 570.

As everyone knows, there are two quite distinct ways of speaking about God. The first is appropriate for ordinary understanding and does contain some truth, albeit truth which is relative to human beings; and it is this way of speaking that is generally employed in Holy Scripture. The second way of speaking comes closer to expressing the naked truth—truth which is not relative to human beings; it is this way of speaking that everyone ought to use when philosophizing ...<sup>72</sup>

Thus, Descartes admitted to subscribing to the ancient notion of biblical accommodation, which was intimately connected with the beginnings of Copernicanism. Around 1540, one G.J. Rheticus (1514–1574), Copernicus' only direct pupil, wrote a treatise in which it was argued that since the Bible in many places is accommodated to human understanding and does not intend to speak in the manner philosophers do, it would be a mistake to take scriptural metaphors literally. Fittingly, this particular treatise was only published in 1651, in Utrecht—doubtless by one of the local Cartesians engaged in the continuing quarrel with professor Voet and his supporters.<sup>73</sup>

The concept of 'accommodation' was particularly suited to the designs of Dutch Cartesians, since it had figured prominently in the theology of Calvin himself. Calvin had already affirmed the necessity to investigate, in reading the Bible, the *mens scriptoris* by researching the *circumstantia* in order to discover the *sensus genuinus* or *prior, verus, simplex*, or *grammaticus* of the Word of God. What is more, as the Cartesian Wittichius would note in his *Dissertationes duae*,<sup>74</sup> Calvin had himself expressly recognized that God does indeed speak *ad captum vulgi*.<sup>75</sup> In fact, by categorically refusing the hermeneutical principle of accommodation and by sticking to a strict literalism, the Voetian Calvinists of the Republic clearly moved away from Calvin's own views

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<sup>72</sup> Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, II, 102; *Oeuvres*, VII, 102; cf. IX-2, 112: 'Car tout le monde connoist assez la distinction qui est entre ces façons de parler de Dieu, dont l'écriture se sert ordinairement, qui sont accommodées à la capacité du vulgaire & qui contiennent bien quelque vérité, mais seulement en tant qu'elle est rapporté aux hommes, & celles qui expriment une vérité plus simple & plus pure & qui ne change point de nature, encore qu'elle ne leur soit point rapportée.'

<sup>73</sup> Hooykaas, *G.J. Rheticus' Treatise on Holy Scripture*. See also Westman, 'The Copernicans and the Churches' and Vermij, 'Het copernicanisme in de Republiek'.

<sup>74</sup> Wittichius, *Dissertationes Duae*, 6 ff and 65. See Bizer, 'Die reformierte Orthodoxie und der Cartesianismus'; Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik*, 131–170; Dibon, 'Connaissance révélée et connaissance rationnelle'.

<sup>75</sup> Battles, 'God Was Accommodating Himself'; Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 93–109, 118–127; Kraus, 'Calvins exegetische Prinzipien'; Benin, *The Footprints of God*, 187–196. For a British perspective, see: Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, 133 ff.

on the subject. For Calvin had derived his hermeneutics from the classical rhetorical tradition, which was permeated by the notion that communication without accommodation is unthinkable. According to the French reformer, himself a product of the best traditions of Renaissance scholarship, the Scriptures can only be understood once we are prepared to take heed of the historical circumstances under which the Word of God has been spoken. Ford Lewis Battles even went so far as to argue that Calvin's understanding of the relationship between God and man can also only be appreciated against this background: 'The entire created universe and all its parts are naught but a grand accommodation on God's part of himself to the crowning glory (and subsequent shame) of that creation, namely man.'<sup>76</sup>

The way in which Calvin's God discloses Himself appears to unfold according to a tripartite metaphor which alternately depicts Him as our Father, our Teacher, and our Physician — corresponding to our predicament of being children, pupils, and at base ill, that is, fallen. Because God accommodates Himself, we might be persuaded to think that Scripture contradicts itself, for example where God is said to have a mouth, ears, hands and feet, whereas it states as well that He is a pure spirit and whereas we know that God's essence is infinite.<sup>77</sup> Calvin secured the specifically *Christian* character of his hermeneutics by concluding that the ultimate and supreme act of accommodation must have been the Incarnation. Battles has pointed to Calvin's *Commentary on I Peter*, in which the great reformer wrote:

Hence it is clear that we cannot trust in God (*Deo credere*) save through Christ. In Christ God so to speak makes himself little (*quodam modo parvum facit*), in order to lower himself to our capacity (*Ut se ad captum nostrum submittat*)...<sup>78</sup>

Christopher Wittichius agreed completely, arguing that God often speaks to us as if we were His children.<sup>79</sup> And Wittichius' judgement matters, since he served as the spokesman for the majority of Dutch Cartesians. Born in Silesia, this Groningen trained divine held a chair at the 'hogeschool' of Nijmegen from 1655 to 1671, when he was

<sup>76</sup> Battles, 'God Was Accommodating Himself', 21.

<sup>77</sup> Calvin, *Institutio*, I, 31.1.

<sup>78</sup> Battles, 'God Was Accommodating Himself', 38.

<sup>79</sup> Wittichius, *Dissertationes duae*, 91: 'Scriptura Sacra descendendo ad captum vulgi, ita ut etiam secundum ipsius opinionem erroneam loquatur, non propterea ostendit se delectari rebus inanibus, sed tantum se eo usque etiam velle demittere, ut, quemadmodum pater cum suis infantibus loquitur & balbitur etsi sciat istas formullas loquendi infantum non quadrare ad veritatem, ita pariter nobiscum balbutire velit.'

called to Leiden, and where he was professor of theology until his death in 1687.

In Wittichius' view, the uproar over Cartesian natural philosophy was largely based on the assumption that the Bible contained truths regarding the constitution of nature. According to Wittichius this was a mistake, since the message of the Bible is merely concerned with the conditions for salvation. The Scriptures deliver a superior morality, not a particular view on nature as such. On the other hand, as long as natural philosophers do not concern themselves with genuinely theological matters, it must be deemed highly unlikely that any real contradictions between the two disciplines should occur. In the preface to the *Dissertationes duae*, Wittichius sketched the occasion of his intervention. In Groningen and in Herborn, his friends Tobias Andreae and Johannes Clauberg had been questioning the so-called 'Mosaic physics' by remarking that the Bible often speaks 'according to the understanding of the common man'. Dutch admirers of Danaeus had objected to this: Schoock had issued his *De scepticismo* (1652), and the Leiden minister Jacobus du Bois (?–1661) had written a *Dialogus theologico-astronomicus* (1653).<sup>80</sup> According to Schoock, the hermeneutics of accommodation was simply absurd, since it presupposed that the Holy Spirit either was not prepared to speak the truth or unable to.<sup>81</sup> Although Schoock admitted that a few isolated cases could be found in which the Holy Spirit had adjusted its vocabulary to 'the people', Wittichius' employment of the principle of accommodation was essentially blasphemous. After several more Voetians had attacked Wittichius' *Dissertationes*,<sup>82</sup> a sequel came out in 1656, entitled *De Stylo Scripturae*, that again was seriously criticized.<sup>83</sup> Undaunted, Wittichius replied with his *Consensus veritatis*, and, finally, he published in 1671 in Leiden a *Theologia pacifica*, once more summing up the advantage of his hermeneutical stance.

There can be little doubt that the 'Cartesian' hermeneutics supplied by Wittichius, from a Calvinist perspective, was perfectly orthodox. During the second half of the seventeenth century it would constantly be called upon by scientists and philosophers, arguing for the autonomy of natural philosophy. It should be noted, howev-

<sup>80</sup> Schoock, *De scepticismo*, 399–426. See also Revius, *Statera philosophiae Cartesianae*.

<sup>81</sup> Schoock, *De scepticismo*, 402. See Verbeek, 'From "Learned Ignorance" to Scepticism'.

<sup>82</sup> Revius, *Anti-Wittichius*; Herbinius, *Famosae de Solis vel Telluris Motu controversiae Examen*; Van Maastricht, *Vindiciae Veritatis et Auctoritatis Sacrae Scripturae*.

<sup>83</sup> Wittichius, *Consideratio Theologica de Stylo Scripturae*; Essenius, *Disputationes Theologicae Quatuor*.

er, that there were also theological reasons which turned it into an attractive option. Probably Abraham Heidanus' position yields the most interesting illustration of this fact, since his views seem to clarify a much debated question, namely the precise nature of the Cartesio-Cocceian alliance that was to prove extremely helpful in neutralizing any possible trespassing of Cartesian philosophy into the realm of theology. For Heidanus, a professional and much respected theologian, stressed the methodological purity of the Cartesian separation of philosophy and theology. According to Heidanus, the refusal to keep the two apart was an essentially Roman Catholic aberration. In 1643, his Leiden colleague Revius had issued a *Suarez repurgatus*, but to Heidanus' mind there was nothing to purge in Suarez. On the contrary, he was deeply concerned over the admiration among his Voetian colleagues for 'popish' metaphysics. He deemed it

very detrimental to hire philosophy as a maidservant, since this servant is often wrong and mistaken and therefore not particularly loyal. In some cases she even assumes mastery over her mistress, as has happened to Popery, dominated by *Peripatetic philosophy*, raped and infected by impurities, and more worthy of the name *theologia scholastica* than of *theologia scriptuaria* or *christiana*.<sup>84</sup>

This observation may well serve as the point of departure for explaining the remarkable success of the Cartesio-Cocceian alliance. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) observed that in reality these two schools of thought had nothing in common except that both were 'new'.<sup>85</sup> The fact is that nothing in Cocceian theology refers to Cartesianism, or the other way around.<sup>86</sup> Cocceius' lack of interest in philosophy has even been linked to William Ames' rejection of natural theology.<sup>87</sup> But this is probably precisely what made Cartesianism and Cocceianism such ideal partners, for Cocceian divines made a conscious effort to formulate a strictly biblical theology, in no way dependent

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<sup>84</sup> Heidanus, *Consideration*, 18. See also his *De origine erroris*, 98–126 and Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 156–177. For a recent, deep analysis of Heidanus' Cartesianism, see Goudriaan, 'Die Rezeption des cartesianischen Gottesgedanken bei Abraham Heidanus'.

<sup>85</sup> Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, art. Matthieu Dresserus, rem. A.

<sup>86</sup> Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund*; Faulenbach, *Weg und Ziel der Erkenntniss Christi*; McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands*, 344–374; Van Asselt, *Amicitia Dei*, esp. 32–44 and *Johannes Coccejus*, esp. 143–164; Broeyer en Van der Wall (red.) *Een richtingensrijd in de gereformeerde kerk*; Van der Wall, 'Orthodoxy and Scepticism' and 'Profetie en providentie'.

<sup>87</sup> Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism*, 173–176. See also Moltmann, 'Zur Bedeutung des Petrus Ramus'; Peeters, 'Redenkonst en redenrijkkonst'.



on any philosophical consideration. Wittichius' 'separatism' served a twofold purpose: on the one hand it made an end to the interference by theologians in philosophical matters, while on the other, it freed theology from unwanted intrusion by philosophers. It rejected both Danaeus' 'Mosaic physics' and 'Socinian' rationalism.

A fine example of the Cartesio-Cocceian rejection of biblical literalism is supplied by Heidanus' position on the debate concerning the Lord's Day. One of the more urgent issues dividing Voetian and Cocceian ministers throughout the Republic regarded the exact interpretation of Moses' fourth commandment.<sup>88</sup> It goes without saying that nobody argued over the necessity to uphold the sacrosanctity of the Sabbath. But why exactly should one rest on Sunday, and how far should the foresaking of worldly affairs go? Was one allowed to put out a fire on Sundays? To catch lice? To go hunting for flees? It did not take much for Voetians and Cocceians to start arguing, one party accusing the other of neglecting the reformed heritage as such. Whereas Voetians insisted on a literal interpretation of the fourth commandment, Cocceians preferred to acknowledge its 'typological' significance. This meant that the real intention of this commandment should be grasped with the insight that after the coming of Christ, the nature of God's covenant with man had been altered to the extent that Moses' 'Jewish Laws' could henceforth only be regarded as 'types', or examples, foreboding the laws promulgated by Christ. In 1658, during a disputation at Leiden, Heidanus emphatically rejected the Voetian demand for a complete abstinence of worldly pleasures on Sundays, since 'this doctrine was born to raise endless doubts and to create disagreement'.<sup>89</sup> According to Heidanus, this was simply *unchristian*.

### 3. *From Philosophia naturalis to Physics*

During the second half of the seventeenth century Cartesianism turned into *the* modern philosophy that was taught at the faculties of arts in the Republic. While Wittichius, Heidanus and Cocceius demonstrated that this did not pose a threat to the autonomy of theology, it was now up to the natural philosophers to prove the

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<sup>88</sup> See Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, II, 207 ff; Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 38 ff; Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund*, 116–123; Visser, *De geschiedenis van den sabbatsstrijd*, 115 ff; Van Asselt, *Johannes Coccejus*, 52–57.

<sup>89</sup> Heidanus, *Eenige stellingen aengaende den rust-dagh*, 49.

*philosophical* advantages to be drawn from this intellectual revolution. The omens had been good. As we saw in the first chapter, the emerging Dutch Republic, a trading nation at war, harboured a blossoming scientific culture, in which applied mathematics in particular played a vital role. To be sure, the educated élite of the Republic must have been in an excellent position to be seriously interested in the cultivation of a 'mathematical' philosophy. Once the *Géométrie*, no doubt the most important appendix to Descartes' *Discours*, had to be re-edited in Latin in order to make it suitable for academic use, the French philosopher had every reason to be grateful to his editor, the Leiden mathematician Frans van Schooten jr.<sup>90</sup> Van Schooten had enrolled in 1631. Merely four years later he was able to take over his father's courses, when the latter fell ill. Once Van Schooten sr. died in 1645, his son succeeded him as professor. Within a year he published his first book, and in 1649 the heavily annotated *Geometria* followed suit.<sup>91</sup> As a student he had already met with Descartes, whom he would continue to admire, although he did not hesitate to alter the text of the latter's *Géométrie* considerably. Moreover, in preparing the second edition (1659–1661) he put together a team of former students who added a number of important proofs. They included Johan de Witt (1625–1672), Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695), Johan Hudde (1628–1704) and Hendrik van Heuraet (1634–1660?).<sup>92</sup> Curiously, instead of being grateful, Descartes in his correspondence repeatedly complained about Van Schooten's poor Latin.<sup>93</sup>

Van Schooten's students had more in common besides their interest in Descartes' analytical geometry. They all belonged to the new élite of the Republic. The spectacular boom of the Dutch economy had created an upper class of seriously rich tradesmen whose sons and cousins now were queuing up to fill their seats in the local, provincial and national governments. It has been argued that by the middle of the century the initial insistence on a useful science had grown out of fashion in these circles. It was no longer necessary to have science pay. To be interested in the profit to be made from science may well have been looked down upon by Van Schooten's more fortunate students. Klaas van Berkel has suggested a connection between the definite 'aristocratisation' to be discerned among the leading merchants during the seventeenth century, and the growing interest in

<sup>90</sup> Hofmann, *Frans van Schooten der Jüngere*.

<sup>91</sup> Van Maanen, *Facets of Seventeenth-Century Mathematics*, 23–31.

<sup>92</sup> See also D'Elia, *Christiaan Huygens*, 19–26.

<sup>93</sup> Descartes, *Oeuvres*, V, 143 and 392.

a purely 'theoretical' approach to the natural sciences.<sup>94</sup> The close co-operation between craftsmen and scholars, which had dominated scientific practice in the days of Stevin, Snellius and Metius now quickly came to an end. Research into the important subject of steersmanship has confirmed the growing distance between 'theoristen' and 'practicijs'.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, the breakthrough of mathematical models for mechanics and of the mechanistic worldview for natural philosophy in general, implied a farewell to a perception of natural phenomena which connected with the everyday experience of the world, such as it had been delivered by the Aristotelian tradition. The quantitative world that now was being scrutinized by the physician had little to do with the qualitative, sublunar and orderly space filled with natural substances Peripateticism sought to describe. To put it differently, the world construed by the Cartesian physicist no longer resembled the world in which he actually lived. Cartesian natural philosophy was decidedly anti-intuitive: in reality, it argued, apples are not 'red' at all, and when we call pears 'sweet', we do not really know what we are saying. Johannes de Raey was probably the Dutch Cartesian most acutely aware of the sharp distinction Cartesianism drew between philosophy and 'common sense'.<sup>96</sup> While Aristotelians such as Schoock posed as the defenders of the scientific tradition, supposedly based upon common sense, De Raey admitted that Descartes' epistemology distinguished between the innate 'clear and distinct' ideas which a scientific physics had to be erected from, and the ideas 'by acquaintance', which help us find our way through our daily lives. According to De Raey, a pure *philosophia naturalis* had nothing to offer to life, an empirical physics being a *contradictio in terminis*. This line of reasoning did supply him with an interesting argument in favour of the separation of philosophy from theology—theology to his mind was essentially an experiential science in that it is based on the Bible, which is put in ordinary language—, but it isolated him from the actual course the natural sciences were taking by the second half of the seventeenth century. As we shall see in the next paragraph, natural philosophy was increasingly tied to experiential data. Observation was to prove anything but an impediment to the further development of natural philosophy. For it was turning less

<sup>94</sup> Van Berkel, *In het voetspoor van Stevin*, 35–68. Cf. Kooijmans, 'Patriciaat en aristocratisering in Holland'.

<sup>95</sup> Davids, *Zeewezen en wetenschap*, 373.

<sup>96</sup> Verbeek, *De vrijheid van de filosofie*.

into a philosophy and more and more into a science in the modern term of the word. No scientist seems better suited to illustrate this latter development than the most brilliant 'Cartesian' of the day, Christiaan Huygens.

The co-operation between Van Schooten and his students, resulting in the important, second edition of Descartes' *Geometria* was short-lived. De Witt was about to turn into the most powerful man of the Republic, Hudde, the son of an Amsterdam mayor, would follow his father's footsteps, and Van Heuraet died as a young man.<sup>97</sup> Huygens was the only one of Van Schooten's pupils to dedicate his life to science. Fostering his proverbial prodigy, his father Constantijn held the highest expectations: in 1646 he sent a letter with calculations to Mersenne who could hardly believe his eyes. However, the way in which Christiaan was to prove his mettle in later life provides a telling example of the peculiar way in which Dutch scientists such as Regius had already chosen to ignore Descartes' insistence on the need to have a credible physics based on metaphysics. 'He had no taste for metaphysics', a disappointed Leibniz wrote, in 1714.<sup>98</sup> Huygens only cared for the mathematical input of Cartesian physics. His election, in 1666 to become the first president of the Académie Royale des sciences was due to strictly scientific achievements such as the discovery of Titan, a moon of the planet Saturn, and his construction of a pendulum-clock. Even his contributions to typically 'Cartesian' subjects as Optics and Weight—which were only published in 1690: *Traité de la lumière* and *Cause de la pesanteur*—can hardly be called 'philosophical'. Since Huygens developed severe reservations, in particular with regards to Descartes' *Principia*, the exact nature of his 'Cartesianism' has been repeatedly discussed.<sup>99</sup> As early as the 1650s, Huygens had begun to doubt the validity of Descartes' laws of collision, but at that time Van Schooten was still able to persuade his former student not to publish his concerns.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, the Dutch Cartesians who were employed by the universities, were facing problems of their own. Since when were universities supposed to discover the Truth about the Universe? Universities

<sup>97</sup> Van Maanen, *Facets of Seventeenth-Century Mathematics*, 44–105; Haas, 'Die mathematischen Arbeiten von Johannes Hudde'; Vermij and Atzema, '*Specilla circularia*'.

<sup>98</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Lenses and Waves*, 281. See also Andriessse, *Titan kan niet slapen*, 362.

<sup>99</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Lenses and Waves*, 253–267. See also De Vries, 'Christiaan Huygens entre Descartes et le siècle des lumières'; Hooykaas, *Experientia ac ratione*; Westman, 'Huygens and the Problem of Cartesianism'; Van Berkel, *In het voetspoor van Stevin*, 55–60.

<sup>100</sup> Andriessse, *Titan kan niet slapen*, 112.

such as Padua, where a genuine research tradition had been established, were exceptional. Early modern academies were institutes of education. They produced theologians, physicians and lawyers. It has been stressed *ad nauseam* that the so-called 'Scientific Revolution' took place largely outside academe in independent bodies such as the Royal Society and the Académie Royale des sciences. However, recently much has been done to re-evaluate the role of the early modern university in the rise of the natural sciences. This trend is clearly connected to the recent re-assessment of early modern Aristotelianism.<sup>101</sup> Universities simply were not endowed to do serious research. The faculties of arts lacked both equipment and expertise. That a man such as Heereboord considered the investigation of nature as the primary goal of philosophy, did not in any way imply that he himself as a philosopher took part in this research. In accordance with his eclecticism, he was to remain a *teacher*, who did not teach any particular system of natural philosophy, but chose systematically to present theses from the entire history of philosophy.<sup>102</sup> Descartes, on the other hand, was barely interested in the pedagogical concerns of his first pupils.

During the second half of the century, the scientific status of Cartesianism already started to crumble. The rhetorical appeal of Descartes' *mathesis universalis* appears to have diminished considerably, once even dedicated Cartesians like the Leiden professor Burchard de Volder, grew seriously disenchanted with Cartesian physics. In 1675, after a short trip to the Royal Society, De Volder installed a *Theatrum physicum* at Leiden. The main purpose of this laboratory may have been educational, but its establishment could well be interpreted as a conscious effort to overcome both the factional strife between the Leiden Cartesians and their opponents and the limitations of Cartesian natural philosophy as such. De Volder's practice was actually scarcely distinguishable from the efforts of his colleague Wolfert Senguerd (1646–1724), whose philosophical predilections were still largely Peripatetic. During the final quarter of the seventeenth century, De Volder and Senguerd both seem to have been inspired first and foremost by the example set by Robert Boyle.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See, for example: Feingold, *The Mathematician's Apprenticeship*; Gascoigne, 'A Reappraisal of the Role of the Universities'; Porter, 'The Scientific Revolution and the Universities'; Pedersen, 'Tradition and Innovation'; Wiesenfeldt, *Leerer Raum in Minervas Haus*, Chapter 6.

<sup>102</sup> De Dijn, 'Adriaan Heereboord'. For a particularly helpful analysis, see Vanderjagt, 'Filosofie tussen humanisme en eclecticisme'.

<sup>103</sup> Wiesenfeldt, *Leerer Raum in Minervas Haus*, 71–84, 102 ff and 124 ff. See also De

By the turn of the century, it had become quite clear that the *a priori*, essentially conceptual practice of natural philosophy propagated by such Cartesian professors of philosophy as Johannes de Raey had become an impediment to rather than a condition for scientific progress. As natural philosophers, Heereboord and De Raey failed to contribute anything to the progress of science. It could even be argued that the latter's *Clavis philosophiae naturalis* (1654), reveals that its author had lost contact with the real scientific community of the Republic. His neglect of empirical data went hand in hand with a largely metaphorical conception of what a truly mathematical understanding of the natural order might look like. According to Ruestow, the *Clavis philosophiae naturalis* remained a poor reflection of the complex and still-evolving synthesis of ideas and activities which was the new science.<sup>104</sup>

In 1650, the young Huygens had composed an epitaph on Descartes,<sup>105</sup> but it is important not to overestimate Huygens' 'Cartesianism'. As Fokko Jan Dijksterhuis has put it:

Descartes set Huygens' agenda as he did for seventeenth-century science in general, but in this case it was a mathematical agenda instead of a natural philosophical one. (...) Huygens did not pursue philosophical questions raised by Descartes' natural philosophical programme, he responded to his contributions to the various branches of mathematics.<sup>106</sup>

In 1693, two years before his death, Huygens looked back on the Cartesian revolution. In a much quoted letter to Bayle, commenting on Baillet's biography of Descartes, he wrote of his initial excitement over Cartesianism:

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Pater, 'Experimental Physics'. On Boyle, see Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*.

<sup>104</sup> Ruestow, *Physics at Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Leiden*, 71: 'Like so many under the spell of Cartesianism—following, indeed, the example of Descartes himself in the *Principia Philosophiae*—De Raey failed to give due regard to the procedures being used and refined in the course of the scientific advance and was too readily satisfied with the efforts and pleasures of imagination alone. From top to bottom, from the stellar vortices to the most subtle sense perceptions, nature had been mechanized, but it lacked as yet the mathematical analysis through which the mechanization of nature was to lead to the great achievements of modern science. All things in De Raey's world were now measurable, but little was measured. Despite a display of obvious enthusiasm for the mercury tube of Torricelli, De Raey also paid little heed to the role of experimentation.' See also 90–91.

<sup>105</sup> Huygens, *Oeuvres complètes*, I, 125.

<sup>106</sup> Dijksterhuis, *Lenses and Waves*, 281.

When I read this book of Principles for the first time it seemed to me that everything in the world went as well as it could, and I believed that, when I found some difficulty in it, it was my fault for not grasping his thought well enough. I was only 15 or 16 years old. But having since then discovered in it from time to time things visibly false, and others very little probable I have well returned from the preoccupation where I had been, and right now I find almost nothing that I can approve of as true in his entire physics, nor in his metaphysics, nor in his meteors.<sup>107</sup>

As opposed to Bacon and Gassendi, however, Descartes had the mathematical genius to present his alternative to Aristotelianism in a systematical manner. Unfortunately, Huygens continued, Descartes was not as modest as Galileo, who did not feel he could explain everything, and 'who was not as vain to desire becoming the leader of a sect'. Huygens did not think much of this 'sect', whose members were far too eager in wanting to defend their own views, instead of 'penetrating to the real cause of the many natural phenomena on which Descartes only managed to deliver vaguenesses.' Huygens' severe judgement will come as no surprise to the modern historian, who has learnt not to overestimate Descartes' actual contribution to the so-called Scientific Revolution.<sup>108</sup>

During the second half of the seventeenth century, while Cartesianism dominated the academic practice of natural philosophy, two developments simultaneously prepared its demise. First, it has repeatedly been observed that the impressive level of Dutch mathematics had more or less collapsed by the second half of the century.<sup>109</sup> After Van Schooten had passed away in 1660 and the equippe with which he had edited Descartes' *Geometria* had fallen apart, the level of mathematics declined dramatically. In 1681 the once famous *School voor*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 253. Huygens also explained his initial excitement over Cartesianism: 'What was very pleasant in the beginning when this philosophy began to appear, is that one understood what Mr. Descartes said, instead of the other philosophers who gave us words that made nothing comprehensible, such as those qualities, substantial forms, intentional species, etc. He rejected more universally than anyone before this impertinent ragbag. But what above all recommended his philosophy, is that he did not confine himself to instilling distaste for what is old, but that he dared to substitute for it causes which one can comprehend of all there is in nature.' Cf. Huygens, *Oeuvres complètes*, X, 403 ff.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Dijksterhuis, *De mechanisering van het wereldbeeld*, 444–460; Westfall, *The Construction of Modern Science*, 30–42, 92–104, 120 ff; Hall, *The Revolution in Science*, 165–169 and 194–207; Clarke, 'Descartes' Philosophy of Science and the Scientific Revolution'; Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution*, 69–71 and 160–168.

<sup>109</sup> Van Maanen, *Facets of Seventeenth-Century Mathematics*, 31; Van Berkel, 'From Simon Stevin to Robert Boyle', 107; Vanpaemel, 'Gemengde wiskunde en experimentele fysica', 50–52.

*Nederduytsche Mathematica* was closed. In Groningen, the chair of mathematics was to remain vacant from 1669 to 1690, in Franeker the students no longer bothered to show up. The only branch of the discipline which does seem to have blossomed, was the so-called 'mathematica mixta'. This discipline was developed for the use of instruments, that were increasingly making their mark on the practice of natural philosophy. Secondly, the Cartesian tendency to concentrate on definitions and deduction rather than on detail and data did not fit the Dutch tradition in the natural sciences at all, since, as Harold Cook has put it, "The 'big science' of the Golden Age, then, like that elsewhere in Europe, consisted of laborious and expensive work done in anatomical theatres and backrooms, botanical gardens, and chemical laboratories."<sup>110</sup>

Many of the most spectacular developments in the natural sciences were achieved by non-academic, largely independent 'amateurs' with a particular fascination for meticulous observation. Antonie van Leeuwenhoek and the singular Jan Swammerdam, active on the fringes of the academic world are prime examples of this. As has recently been shown by E.G. Ruestow, the sudden breakthrough, in the 1660s, of the microscope put a particular strain on the general lack of interest among Cartesians for empirical data.<sup>111</sup> In the early seventeenth century, Cornelis Drebbel (1572–1633), for instance had done some microscopical research on lice. During the 1660s, however, microscopes became available, revealing a world hitherto invisible. Robert Hooke published his *Micrographia* (1665), and such familiar names as Huygens, Hudde, and Spinoza all took a keen interest in the production of lenses.<sup>112</sup>

Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680) and Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723) in particular amazed their contemporaries by their discovery of the seemingly infinite complexity of even the most simple organisms. Swammerdam was the son of a rich Amsterdam apothecary who owned a famous natural cabinet. He was already twenty-four when he matriculated at Leiden to study medicine with Sylvius. Six years later he wrote his dissertation, expounding a mechanist theory of respiration, after which he spent the rest of his life as a deeply religious, independent scientist. His *Historia Insectorum Gene-*

<sup>110</sup> Cook, 'The New Philosophy in the Low Countries', 135.

<sup>111</sup> Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic*. See also Van Berkel, 'Intellectuals against Leeuwenhoek'.

<sup>112</sup> Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic*, 6–36; Fournier, *The Fabric of Life*, 9–48. Cf. Klever en Van Zuylen, 'Insignis opticus'.



*ralis* (1669) implied a breakthrough for entomology. Swammerdam was well aware of the novelty of his findings, expressing his amazement over the fact that 'from Aristotle's days' mankind had been 'blind' to what he himself had brought to light by careful observation.<sup>113</sup> He was the first naturalist to come up with an adequate description of the chrysalis of a butterfly. The fact that the butterfly seemed present in the chrysalis, was interpreted by Swammerdam as a confirmation of the so-called preformation-theory. In fact, he seems to have regarded the whole of living nature as a gradual development of already existing organisms. His mechanicism excluded the possibility of spontaneous generation.<sup>114</sup>

Van Leeuwenhoek had no academic background. He had no foreign languages either, but as a lowly clerk at the city hall of Delft, he must have had a lot of spare time, which enabled him to construct several hundreds of famously accurate microscopes with which he made the most remarkable observations. It was only during the 1670s that the Royal Society was alerted to the achievements of Van Leeuwenhoek. In 1677 he was able to publish in the *Transactions* his discovery of the cells he had observed in his own semen. Van Leeuwenhoek too shared a certain sympathy for Descartes' corpuscularianism. He felt he actually observed the very particles Descartes had presupposed to exist, until his research into the texture of muscular tissue made him change his mind.<sup>115</sup> In general, the role of naturalists in the spreading and confirmation of Cartesian natural philosophy was not unambiguous.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, by their very nature their findings regarded *details*. It concerned the circulation of the blood and the way the organs and the muscles operated. They did not steer the direction of natural philosophy as such. Van Leeuwenhoek in particular was more interested in the accurate description of his observations, than in the formulation of speculative hypotheses concerning the structure of the natural world in general.

On the whole, the views of an orthodox Cartesian such as De Raey, to whom natural philosophy was still largely a matter of philosophical speculation, does not seem to have fitted in with a more

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<sup>113</sup> Swammerdam, *Historia Insectorum Generalis*, Naa-Reeden, 10. Descartes is being praised explicitly on 6 and 9, and so is Boyle, on 9.

<sup>114</sup> Visser, 'Jan Swammerdam', 67–68. Cf. Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic*, 241–259; Fournier, *The Fabric of Life*, 62–72 and 146–151.

<sup>115</sup> Palm, 'Antoni van Leeuwenhoek', 56. Cf. Snelders, 'Antoni van Leeuwenhoek's Mechanistic View of the World', 66–67; Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic*, 182 ff; Fournier, *The Fabric of Life*, 79–91, 106–112 and 157–177.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Lindeboom, *Descartes and Medicine*.

general and wide-spread fascination among his contemporaries for the details of nature. Among the academic supporters of Cartesianism, only the physicians seem to have combined the obsession with detailed observation and far flung designs concerning the nature of reality. At Leiden from 1594 onwards, medical lectures were given in the *hortus botanicus*. The famous Enkhuizen physician Bernadus Paludanus (1550–1633) had been asked to become the director of this garden, since he was known all over Europe on account of his incredible collection of minerals and stones, plants and animals, and ethnographic exotica, which he had collected during his travels through the Baltic and the Middle East. (A recent survey of ninety private collectors in Amsterdam has revealed a particular seventeenth-century fascination for *naturalia*, especially shells and insects.)<sup>117</sup>

Leiden university also boasted an anatomical theatre, and the Leiden physicians were rather exceptional in that they actually promoted empirical research. The fact that all the early Leiden professors of medicine had been trained at Padua continued to make itself felt.<sup>118</sup> The most important Cartesian physician of the day was François de le Boë Sylvius.<sup>119</sup> In 1637 he received his doctorate and the following year he was allowed to lecture privately on anatomy. Just like Descartes and Regius, he subscribed to Harvey's (1578–1657) theory on the circulation of blood, but unlike them he was concerned to prove this theory experimentally. In a series of rather macabre experiments involving dead and living dogs, rabbits and other mammals, Sylvius and his colleague Johannes Walaeus (1604–1649) set out to confirm Harvey had been right.<sup>120</sup> Despite the great success of his experimental classes, Sylvius waited in vain to be appointed to a chair. In the meantime he decided to set up a flourishing practice in Amsterdam. He became a prominent member of the local *Collegium medicum*.<sup>121</sup> In 1658 he was finally made a professor at Leiden, where he bought a large house on the Rapenburg, in which he installed no

<sup>117</sup> Van Gelder, 'Liefhebbers en geleerde luiden'; Van der Veen, "Dit klain vertrek bevat een Wereld vol gewoel".

<sup>118</sup> De Ridder-Symoens, 'Italian and Dutch Universities'.

<sup>119</sup> Baumann, *François dele Boe Sylvius*.

<sup>120</sup> Lindeboom, 'Dog and Frog'. It should be noted that Harvey's *De motu cordis* was being admired from a very early stage by several Rotterdam physicians already. See Van Lieburg, 'Zacharias Sylvius' and 'De dichter-medicus Daniël Jonctys'. On Walaeus, see Schouten, *Johannes Walaeus*. In fact, Harvey would make use of several of Walaeus' observations, without acknowledging their original author: *ibid.*, 133–136.

<sup>121</sup> Haver Droeze, *Het Collegium medicum Amstelaedamense*.

less than three laboratories. Both his physiology and his pathology were marked by his commitment to mechanism: the movement of bodily fluids to his mind represented hydrodynamic processes.<sup>122</sup> But again, his writings, very much like those of his Utrecht colleague Regius, do not reveal the slightest interest in Descartes' original conception of philosophy as a tree, the roots of which were supposedly to be compared with metaphysics: Sylvius could not have cared less.

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<sup>122</sup> Beukers, 'Het laboratorium van Sylvius' and 'Mechanistische principes'.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CARTESIAN POLITICS

#### 1. *The First Stadholderless Age*

During the second half of the seventeenth century, the practice of philosophy in the Dutch Republic was largely dominated by the breakthrough of Cartesianism. By the 1650s, this new philosophy was rapidly becoming extremely successful among the student population of the young universities of the Republic. A growing number of professors also started to identify with this new philosophy, which originally had been only one of many competing alternatives to the Aristotelian tradition. Plain facts such as the latter's inability to incorporate the shift in cosmology from a geo- to a heliocentric paradigm, and its dependence on obsolete notions like 'substantial form' and its related conception of causality, were of course instrumental to the gradual erosion of Aristotle's authority. The unique advantage of Cartesianism as a philosophical system, meanwhile, was its ability to serve as a general framework for the sciences in general, which enabled it to harbour the latest developments in such diverse subjects as mathematics, medicine, and astronomy. We have also seen that in the wider context of cultural history another key-feature of Aristotelianism had been questioned earlier, namely its sharp distinction between theoretical and practical science. Descartes' reputation as a mathematician, and his exciting promise to deliver the groundworks for an explanation of the entire physical universe which would provide a degree of certainty and indubitability hitherto only achieved in geometry must have had a particular appeal to Dutch scientists and philosophers who had been raised in a culture which had learnt to appreciate this particular discipline.

The further fact that Descartes had consciously and successfully targeted the new universities of the Republic as the spot from which his views were to conquer the learned world, obviously influenced the way Cartesianism as a movement was to develop. Academic Cartesians, as public officials under the direct responsibility of the regenten who made up the directorate of the universities, were in no way supposed to preach any kind of revolution. It was their task

to safeguard the continuation of what had already proved its mettle, and which was being taught in the rest of Europe as well, while at the same time making room for change, so that the academic curriculum would not lag too far behind in relation to scholarly and scientific developments which were taking place outside the academic world.

Purely by chance we have a remarkable document at our disposal, dating from 1651, which illustrates both the rise of Cartesianism in the Dutch academies and the gradual disintegration of Aristotelianism, which was, of course, still the official philosophy to be taught at the Dutch faculties of arts.<sup>1</sup> On 1st July 1651, count Louis Henry of Nassau, protector of the *Hohe Schule* at Herborn, wrote a letter to the universities of Leiden, Franeker, Groningen, Utrecht and Harderwijk, and to the Illustrious School of Breda. At Herborn one young scholar had been appointed to a chair in philosophy and another to a chair in theology and mathematics. Both had been educated in the Republic and both had a reputation for being Cartesians. In fact, both were embarking on what were to prove long and distinguished careers. For the philosopher Johannes Clauberg would rapidly become the most important German Cartesian of his generation, whereas Christopher Wittichius was destined to become the leading Cartesian theologian in the Republic. Their Herborn colleagues, however, were highly suspicious of the new philosophy which both were known to embrace, and began a campaign to have Clauberg and Wittichius removed. In his letter Louis Henry wished to be enlightened on the Dutch experience of Cartesianism. He was well aware of the tumultuous history of Dutch Cartesianism up until then, and he was particularly interested to learn more about the ramifications of this new philosophy for the subjects taught at the higher faculties.

All the Dutch universities duly obliged to Louis Henry's request, and nearly the entire correspondence has survived, due to the fact that it was published in 1653.<sup>2</sup> In view of the official stance of Utrecht and Leiden, the replies sent to Herborn were remarkably mild. As a matter of fact, none of the Dutch authorities cared to condemn Cartesianism as such. Arguably the most remarkable reply was posted from Harderwijk. It had been signed by the Aristotelian philosopher Gisbert ab Isendoorn, who even went so far as to praise Descartes' math-

<sup>1</sup> Menk, "“*Omnis novitas periculosa*”"; Dibon, 'Scepticisme et orthodoxie réformée'; Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 82–86.

<sup>2</sup> Lentulus, *Cartesius triumphatus*. See Bohatec, *Die cartesianische Scholastik*, 149–158, which quotes the correspondence.

ematical genius. Curiously, although he did warn about Descartes' metaphysics, he saw fit to declare that Descartes' natural philosophy should not be dismissed out of hand. Ab Isendoorn's Aristotelian comments testify, as Theo Verbeek has put it, 'not only to a considerable evolution in the appreciation of Descartes' philosophy but also to the fact that the meaning of the word *Aristotelian* was not too specific.'<sup>3</sup> Indeed, once Aristotelian philosophers were willing to admit that, there was perhaps something to Cartesian physics, it became hard to imagine any future for Aristotelianism itself, the heart of which consisted, of course, of a natural philosophy that was completely at odds with Cartesianism.

Descartes' own reservations concerning the kind of following he acquired in the Republic were not at all unjustified. Although he may have been ungrateful to Regius, and although he may not have been aware of the particular constraints imposed on his first pupils, it is also true that after Descartes' death in 1650 a kind of 'Cartesianism' developed which would no doubt have disturbed Descartes even more than Regius's lack of intellectual coherence and neglect of metaphysics. For especially outside the universities, a Dutch 'Cartesianism' was beginning to take shape which was to concentrate on two fields of research, virtually left untouched by the French philosopher himself. We will see that from the 1650s onwards, a host of Dutch authors mainly educated at Leiden and Utrecht, and writing in the vernacular, turned to Cartesian philosophy to tackle some of the main *public* questions, relating to reformed theology and republican politics, which had kept the Republic divided, and would continue to do so.

Significantly, none of these non-academic authors would fail to stress first and foremost Descartes' *mathematical* expertise. We have seen that the Dutch Republic was indeed instrumental in establishing Descartes' fame as the most important mathematician of his day. The efforts of Van Schooten and his pupils including Huygens, Hudde and De Witt had, however, little in common with the issues that were put on the agenda by 'Cartesians' like Van Velthuysen, De la Court, Meyer, Koerbagh, Spinoza, and Bekker during the second half of the seventeenth century. The efforts of these philosophers, working outside academe, constituted a completely new phenomenon. They caused, and in some cases actively engaged, in fierce debates on a wide variety of topics, which were mainly fought through pamphlets.

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<sup>3</sup> Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 85.

The majority of these debates, however, were related to either the relationship between philosophy and theology or concerned politics. Although Descartes himself had been extremely careful in his utterances on the first issue, and virtually silent on the second, the popularity of his views among non-academic philosophers was hardly a coincidence. From his first publication—the *Discours*—onwards, it was quite clear that here was a way of employing philosophy which did not necessitate the kind of scholarship traditionally associated with any academic profession. It presented a way of doing philosophy with a direct appeal ‘to do it yourself’, which is precisely what these Dutch Cartesians did.

In order to make sense of their ‘Cartesianism’ it is necessary first to sketch the main political events which helped to shape the 1650s and 1660s. In the wake of Frederick Henry’s relatively tolerant treatment of Catholics and Remonstrants, and his apparent unwillingness to counter the spreading of Cartesianism at the universities of Utrecht and Leiden, his son William II reformed the alliance between the House of Orange and the Calvinist ministry. After the Synod of Dordrecht, it had enabled Maurice to lend a quasi-monarchical prestige to the Stadholderate. Once William II had succeeded his father Frederick Henry in 1647, and the eventual signing of the Treaty of Westphalia had taken place in 1648, it looked for a while as if the ancient rivalry between the States of Holland and the Stadholder had been decided in favour of the former. As Jonathan Israel has put it,

The regents now openly praised Oldenbarnevelt and there was talk of politics having come full circle, since 1618, with the principles of the States of Holland being again in the ascendant. An anonymous account of the life of Oldenbarnevelt, published in 1648, was dedicated to the Rotterdam magistracy because, the author explained, Rotterdam had, since 1618, been the city which had most resolutely defended ‘freedom of conscience’.<sup>4</sup>

Quite unexpectedly, however, orthodox Calvinists seized the opportunity to take the initiative again, when the newly installed Stadholder appeared only too willing to break Catholic resistance in the Generality Lands to Calvinist attempts at finally converting them to the reformed creed. Moreover, in 1649, William II got into a violent quarrel with the States of Holland over what the minimum size of the Republic’s army should be after the Peace of Münster. The events

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<sup>4</sup> Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 597.

which followed fully justify a comparison with Maurice's coup of 1618. Again, a Prince of Orange had managed to rally the orthodox ministry behind his cause. Again, popular revolt was in the air.

Research into the constitution of political parties and factions in the Republic has cast considerable doubt on the enduring relevance of the Calvinist-Orangist alliance. Both at a local and at a provincial level many other but purely ideological factors were at work in policy-making.<sup>5</sup> During the *national* crisis of 1650, however, the power and ideological coherence of the Orangist party was only too real, just as it had been some thirty years before.<sup>6</sup> Again a Prince of Orange set out to break the back of Holland, and he did so, by having six key regents arrested in The Hague, and by showing his military force: in the summer of 1650 William II toured the main towns of Holland, presenting his demands, while his cousin William Frederick, the Frisian Stadholder, commanding 12,000 troops of the States General's army converged on Amsterdam. No shots were fired, but faced with this kind of well-orchestrated intimidation, the Amsterdam *vroedschap* (town-council) removed William's principal opponents, and agreed to raise its contribution to the army of the Republic. The regenten William had had arrested were incarcerated in castle Loevestein, the same prison which had held Grotius after the Synod of Dordrecht. Although the 'Loevesteinse' party continued to argue along Grotian lines in favour of the autonomy of the independent provinces, shortly after the Peace of Münster the Republic looked well on its way to becoming a federation, controlled at the centre by a highly ambitious Prince of Orange, whose monarchical ambitions had only been further stimulated by his marriage, in 1641, to Mary Stuart, eldest daughter of Charles I.<sup>7</sup> In 1650, orthodox ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church had every reason to look forward confidently. Their interests were being well looked-after; perhaps the battle against Roman Catholicism, Arminianism and Cartesianism could be won after all.

Suddenly, fate struck. For in November 1650, William II fell ill with a fever, and died, a few weeks before the birth of his only son, the future William III. Thus, the First Stadholderless Age began, also known as the age in which 'de ware vrijheid'—true freedom—was realized. Since the 1630s the tolerant politics of William the Silent

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Roorda, *Partij en factie* and *Rond Prins en Patriciaat*; Groenveld, *Evidente factiën in den staet*.

<sup>6</sup> Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 111–121. See also 57–69 and 154–171.

<sup>7</sup> See Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart*; Groenveld, *Verlopend getij*.



and Oldenbarnevelt had been gradually reinstated by Frederick Henry. After the short Stadholderate of his son, the Dutch politics of toleration would now be associated with another Grand Pensionary of Holland.<sup>8</sup> Immediately after the sudden death of the Stadholder, in January 1651 a Great Assembly was held at The Hague. Holland emerged victoriously from this under the careful guidance of its Grand Pensionary Jacob Cats, who exclaimed it was a ‘miracle’ that at last some union had been reached.<sup>9</sup> Now that the common enemy had disappeared, it was only natural to be anxious about the future coherence of the Republic. As far as the administrative organisation of the Republic was concerned, the United Provinces were to remain a very loose confederation indeed, characterized by strong local divergencies.<sup>10</sup> In the eastern and northern provinces, for instance, the nobility certainly remained a force to be reckoned with, but it was at the Great Assembly that a young and extremely agile regent of Dordrecht, one Johan de Witt, former student of Van Schooten, started his glittering political career. Two years later he was elected Grand Pensionary of Holland, an office he was to keep for the rest of his life. For the next two decades Holland was able to dominate the Republic at will—no longer opposed by a Prince of Orange. At last Oldenbarnevelt had an heir.

For us, De Witt is such an extremely interesting character, since he himself had a Cartesian background. In the next paragraph we will see how, from 1655 to 1657, Cartesianism became the subject of a very public quarrel which elicited a large number of pamphlets, that again had Dutch academics at each others throats. Early in 1656, the synod of South Holland received a complaint about the Cartesian ‘insults’ to the authority of Scripture. A substantial number of ministers felt that ‘insulting’ Holy Writ had now become common practice at Leiden in particular.<sup>11</sup> A copy of this complaint was sent to the States of Holland, and presented to the curators of the university, who finally addressed the senate. According to the senate, the complaint was unjustified. To the horror of Abraham Heidanus, however, three Voetian professors of theology thought otherwise. Heidanus wrote a personal letter to Johan de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland, former student of Van Schooten, and a cousin of

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<sup>8</sup> See the great biography by Rowen: *John de Witt*.

<sup>9</sup> Groenveld, ‘*Unie, religie en militie*’, 82.

<sup>10</sup> Frijhoff en Spies, 1650: *Bevochten eendracht*, 79 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 67–68; Rowen, *John de Witt*, 403–410; Wiesenfeldt, *Leerer Raum in Minervas Haus*, 42–46.

Heidanus' mother-in-law. He suggested to De Witt that whatever the States might decide, it would, perhaps, be best to speak 'in general terms' so that no one in particular would be harmed.<sup>12</sup>

Initially it seemed as though Heidanus and De Witt would have their way: the States issued a solemn declaration that they would keenly monitor the situation.<sup>13</sup> They also asked for advice of the Leiden faculty of theology. Heidanus wrote a grateful letter to De Witt, calling him 'the great patron and benefactor' of the Cartesians, whom he had 'liberated' from 'the jaws of envy and malevolence'.<sup>14</sup> But Heidanus' Voetian colleagues would not give up and on September 30, 1656, a resolution was issued by the States of Holland in which the Leiden professors of philosophy and theology were ordered not to abuse the *libertas philosophandi*, nor to mix theology with philosophy. Although this resolution also prohibited 'the continuation' of certain Cartesian 'theses', it did not identify any particular Cartesian teachings, which prompted Heidanus to praise De Witt once more for his refusal to implement effective measures against the Leiden Cartesians.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the sudden reversal of fortune resulting from William's demise and De Witt's ascendancy, in no way put an end to the threat of an Orangist resurgence. Consequently, De Witt struck a deal with the Frisian Stadholder, leaving him with crucial military responsibilities. In 1660–1661 De Witt was faced with new outbursts of popular Orangism in the wake of the Restoration of Charles II, who was brother-in-law to the late William II, uncle to the 10 year-old Prince of Orange. However, he brilliantly silenced these royalist cries by rapidly resolving a number of diplomatic problems with Portugal, France, England and Spain. It goes without saying, that the First Stadholderless Age saw no slackening of Calvinist attempts to strengthen the position of the Reformed Church as the one and only public Church and sole authority in matters of morality. If anything, the loss of a potent Prince who protected the privileges of the Reformed Church, served as an incentive to double the efforts in achieving the so-called 'Nadere Reformatie'. This Further Reformation had captured the hearts and minds of a growing number of Calvinists

<sup>12</sup> Fruin (red.) *Brieven aan Johan de Witt*, I, 194–195; Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 69–70.

<sup>13</sup> Molhuysen (red.) *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche universiteit*, III, 49–50.

<sup>14</sup> Fruin (red.) *Brieven aan Johan de Witt*, I, 196; Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 71.

<sup>15</sup> Molhuysen (red.) *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche universiteit*, III, 57; Cramer, *Abraham Heidanus*, 73.

from the 1620s onwards. The Zeeland minister Willem Teelinck (1579–1629), a fervent Counter-Remonstrant, in many dozens of books and pamphlets had argued that from a reformed perspective, the doctrinal victory over Arminianism at Dordt should have to be complemented first and foremost by a thorough reformation of Dutch morals and life-style. Dancing, the theatre, organ-playing, and cock-fighting were increasingly frowned upon by Teelinck's admirers, who also felt that a strict observance of the Lord's day was called for, lest the Republic should lose divine favour, so crucial in the final stages of the War. Willem Teelinck's eldest son, Maximiliaen (1606–1653) furiously addressed the Great Assembly of 1651, arguing for a 'good reformation', and, as a consequence the banning of all 'papists', 'sects', and Jews. According to Teelinck, the sudden death of William II was clearly God's punishment for the growing religious indifference of the Dutch.<sup>16</sup>

The similarities with Puritanism have often been noted, and indeed, the British movement deeply inspired many of the spokesmen of the Nadere Reformatie. The Puritan divine from Franeker, William Ames, whom we have encountered earlier, wholeheartedly supported the Puritan ambitions of the Dutch Further Reformation. Its best known champion was, however, none other than professor Voetius.<sup>17</sup> Faced with the revival of Arminianism in the Remonstrant Society, founded in 1630 in Rotterdam, and with the spreading of Cartesianism among such former spokesmen of the Counter-Remonstrants like Heidanus, the Voetians saw a new enemy in 'Socinianism', the theology first formulated by the Italian Faustus Socinus (1539–1604). His views laid the foundations of the *Ecclesia minor* which would flourish for a short time in the second half of the sixteenth century in Poland. After the prohibition of this church, eminent Socinians travelled throughout Protestant Europe, trying to find a new home for their *Ecclesia*. Evidently, the tolerant reputation of the Republic attracted many 'Polish Brethren', who mainly tried to influence Remonstrants and Mennonites.<sup>18</sup> Voetius, who by the end of his life was perfectly prepared to 'tolerate' Mennonites, pointed out that Socinians, by denying the divinity of Christ, the Trin-

<sup>16</sup> Frijhoff en Spies, 1650: *Bevochten eendracht*, 48–51.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Van der Sluijs, *Puritanisme en Nadere Reformatie* and Op 't Hof, 'Het culturele gehalte van de Nadere Reformatie'. For two recent, general assessments, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 660ff and 690–699, and Frijhoff, *Wegen van Evert Willemsz*, 351–388.

<sup>18</sup> See Kühler, *Het socinianisme in Nederland*.

ity and the concept of original sin had managed to destroy the very foundation of Christianity, and should therefore be banned from any Christian commonwealth.<sup>19</sup> As early as September 1653, the States of Holland issued a 'Placcaet', officially condemning and prohibiting Socinian gatherings, and the selling of Socinian literature.

In view of the evidence now available, this measure was not really designed to halt any genuinely 'Socinian' movement, but rather to draw the line at what could and what could not be tolerated in general by the State, while the Church, that is the Calvinist ministry, now no longer able to condemn Remonstrants for being what they were, was in a position to renew its offensive against its old enemy, by pointing out that Remonstrants *were* in reality Socinians.<sup>20</sup> In fact, this Placcaet had been backed by the Leiden faculty of theology, including Heidanus, who had been personally engaged in a long and bitter polemic with Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), probably the most able Arminian theologian of the century. The 'Socinian' label, however, also suited Calvinist purposes in the campaign against Cartesianism, for whilst Remonstrant theologians could now be accused of deriving their particular interpretation of predestination from the forbidden 'Polish' affirmation of the freedom of the will, Cartesian philosophers could henceforth be revealed as Socinians in disguise on account of their perillous 'rationalism', which was widely held as a threat to the supremacy of theology as *regina scientiarum*.

The prohibition of Socinianism can hardly have been designed to counter the threat of a new *church*, since apart from a number of Polish refugees, genuine Socinians could simply not be found in the Republic. Neither Jan Knol (?–1672), the translator of the Socinian confession (1659), nor Frans Kuyper (1629–1691), notorious editor of the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* (1668–) seem to have been genuine Socinians themselves.<sup>21</sup> That the measure of 1653 to halt the proliferation of anti-Trinitarianism in general, was no dead letter, was shown by the fate of a decidedly unitarian treatise such as *Van de Apostasie*, published in 1659 by the lawyer and nobleman Lancelot van Brederode, which was banned.<sup>22</sup> But the Utrecht-born mennonite preacher Jacob Ostens (1630–1678), who had a practice

<sup>19</sup> De Jong, 'Voetius en de tolerantie'. See Voetius, *Politica Ecclesiastica*.

<sup>20</sup> On the question how 'Socinian' remonstrant theology actually was, see Hoenderdaal, 'Arminius en Episcopius'.

<sup>21</sup> On Knol, see De Groot, 'Die erste niederländische Übersetzung des Rakower Katechismus' and 'De Amsterdamse collegiant Jan Knol'. On Kuyper's Socinianism: Vercruyse, 'Frans Kuyper'.

<sup>22</sup> Zilverberg, 'Lancelot van Brederode'.

as a *chirurgijn* in Rotterdam, and who wrote several treatises revealing genuine sympathy for Socinianism, was left alone by the authorities, in spite of the violent attacks from such influential ministers as Cornelis Gentman (1617–1696), a pupil of Voetius', and Jacob Borstius (1612–1680). Borstius was one of the most popular preachers of his day, and had made something of a name for himself, by starting the so-called 'hairy war'—after delivering a series of sermons on the moral perils of wearing long hair in the 1640s.<sup>23</sup> The Placcaet of 1653 did play a role in the isolation of a man like Ostens, whose eirenical endeavours were consciously obstructed both by the local Remonstrants and by the majority of his own Mennonite congregation. Ostens meanwhile also seems to have been fascinated by the philosophy of Descartes. In a letter, dating from 1662 which he received from an old friend from Utrecht, there is talk of Ostens preparing a translation of Descartes. Nothing much came of this project, so let us now take a closer look at Ostens' friend, for it was he who started the first public debate, held mainly in the vernacular, on the merits of Philosophy in general and Cartesianism in particular, which erupted during the 1650s.

## 2. *Cartesian Hermeneutics*

Once Cartesianism had turned into a public issue, the academic origins of the debate continued to make themselves felt. In fact, the immediate reason for the first flurry of pamphlets which appeared in the Republic on Descartes' philosophy was strictly academic. At Herborn, in the early 1650s, the newly installed professors Wittich and Clauberg had come under attack over Descartes' Copernicanism, an issue which had also deeply worried the Leiden professor Revius, his Groningen colleague Schoock and Voetian ministers such as Jacob du Bois and Peter van Maastricht. Voetius himself had been a declared anti-Copernican well before Descartes had published a single word.<sup>24</sup> For our purposes this academic dispute, the details of which are still far from clear,<sup>25</sup> are not as important as the turn the issue

<sup>23</sup> Van Bunge, 'De Rotterdamse collegiant Jacob Ostens'. On Borstius' contribution to the 'hairy war', see his *De Predicatie van 't lang-hayr*.

<sup>24</sup> Bizer, 'Die reformierte Orthodoxie und der Cartesianismus'; Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik*, 131–170; Dibon, 'Connaissance révélée et connaissance rationelle'; McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands*, 270–320; Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*.

<sup>25</sup> Dibon, 'Connaissance révélée et connaissance rationelle', 695; Bizer, 'Die re-

took once it hit the public arena. Significantly, it was a politician who brought the matter to the public's attention—a politician, however, who besides law and medicine, had studied philosophy and theology, and whose interests brought him into personal contact with a range of scholars and scientists including Leibniz, Spinoza, Hudde, and Van Leeuwenhoek.<sup>26</sup> Lambertus van Velthuysen (1622–1685), a former student of Regius at Utrecht and of Heereboord at Leiden, set up a medical practice in Utrecht, became a *bewindvoerder* (trustee) of the West Indian Company in 1665, and entered the *vroedschap* (town-council) of his home town in 1667, after which he also became *schepen* (magistrate). As an author he is mainly known for his defence of Hobbes' *De cive*, published anonymously in 1651, and his other work on political philosophy and natural law.<sup>27</sup> In 1680, at the end of his career he issued two rather substantial volumes of *Opera Omnia* in Rotterdam. Beside the *jus naturale*, there was one other theme which occupied Van Velthuysen throughout his career as a publishing philosopher, namely the question of the methodology suited to unravel Holy Writ.

Since biblical hermeneutics would continue to divide Dutch philosophers and theologians throughout the century, it may well be instructive to follow closely the arguments involved in this debate. In 1655 Van Velthuysen caused a furious row by anonymously publishing a *Bewijs dat het gevoelen van die geenen, die leeren der Sonne Stilstandt, En des Aertrycks Beweging niet strydich is met Godts Woort* (Proof that the sentiments of those who teach that the Sun Stands Still and that the Earth Moves are not in conflict with the Word of God). Rienk Vermij has recently suggested that Van Velthuysen may well have been incited to enter the fray by the interference, shortly before, of the local church council on a disputation held at Utrecht on the immortality of the souls of animals.<sup>28</sup> According to Van Velthuysen, it was time to redefine the Church's role with regards to philosophy. In his view the Voetian opposition to the heliocentric picture of the world, was solely due to the immense success of Cartesianism:

people are starting to notice that the philosophy of the very learned and acute Descartes, whose knowledge of mathematics and natural matters

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formierte Orthodoxie', 341.

<sup>26</sup> Houtzager, 'Lambert van Veldhuyzen'; Hein und Heinekamp, 'Eine neu gefundener Brief von Leibniz'.

<sup>27</sup> Kossmann, *Politieke theorie in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland*, 34–35; Sécretan, 'La réception de Hobbes aux Pays Bas' and 'L' *Epistolica Dissertatio*'.

<sup>28</sup> Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*.

is unequalled throughout the centuries, is beginning to break through and is now being taught in all the academies and in all the schools.<sup>29</sup>

By suddenly attacking Copernicanism, the Voetians, according to Van Velthuysen, hoped to turn cosmology into a theological issue, and even worse, to stir the mob against the philosophy of Descartes, and its supporters. Perfectly respectable ministers and aspiring politicians had been denied office on account of their Cartesian leanings. Clearly this had to be stopped. In order to halt this Voetian offensive, Van Velthuysen met his opponents on their own ground, and set out to investigate the biblical basis of their rejection of Copernicanism. However, he quickly came to the conclusion that the Bible teaches neither that the sun nor the earth is the centre of the universe. Indeed, in view of the evidence supplied by reason in favour of Copernicanism, it was urgently necessary to establish the authority of the Scriptures. Since Scripture is the *meaning* it conveys, the explanation of Scripture will have to take heed of the circumstances, that is the times at which, the places where, and the people by whom the Bible was written. This implies that passages that we do not understand should not be tempered with for the sake of their possible intelligibility. Only plain contradictions should be rationally solved. Unintelligible texts should simply be *believed*. Van Velthuysen further specified this statement by affirming that the meaning of a biblical text is constituted by the will of the Holy Ghost ‘*to dogmatize, to teach, to affirm, to deny*’ a certain tenet. Not every sentence in the Bible is inspired by the Holy Ghost, and we have to take the circumstances from which Scripture originated into account, precisely in order to find out where the Holy Ghost ‘dogmatizes’ etc. and where it does not; ‘the circumstances’, so Van Velthuysen argued, ‘mean as much as the words, they are *part* of the text.’

According to Van Velthuysen this means that we should not admit the view that the Scriptures sometimes speak *ad captum vulgi*.<sup>30</sup> This must have been a tacit comment on Christopher Wittichius’ eloquent elaboration of Descartes’ own remarks on the subject. Van Velthuysen tried to clarify his disagreement with Wittichius by pointing to those biblical passages in which animals seem to be furnished with qualities like ‘knowledge, hope and expectation’. As a true Cartesian, Van Velthuysen felt that animals do not possess souls. Neither does the Bible mean to speak according to vulgar imagination. The

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<sup>29</sup> [Van Velthuysen] *Bewijs*, 4

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–9.

circumstances, however, go to show that the Holy Spirit only refers to the behaviour of animals. In these particular cases, the Holy Ghost simply refrains from any judgment of 'internal causes'. Not surprisingly, Van Velthuysen deemed it 'evident' that animals are without souls.<sup>31</sup> The immense advantage of this account, according to Van Velthuysen, is that it 'frees' the Bible 'from lies'.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Van Velthuysen argued, those who ascribe the geocentric picture of the universe to the Scriptures, simply do not understand what movement entails. Motion, according to him, is always relative. Only bodies move and they move only in relation to other bodies, which in turn are only moving or at rest in relation to other bodies themselves. A ship at sea, for instance, moves in relation to the shore, yet in relation to its cargo it is at rest. Biblical texts which imply that the earth rests would only be in conflict with Copernicanism if they expressly stated that the earth is at rest in relation to the sun.<sup>33</sup>

This leaves us with a very limited set of problematic passages: *Psalms* 19:6, 104:19, *Ecclesiastes* 1:4–5, *Job* 9:6–7, *Matthew* 5:45, *Ezra* 38:7, 2 *Kings* 20:11, and *Joshua* 10:12. Needless to say, Van Velthuysen easily showed that in all these instances the Holy Ghost in as far as it wants to 'dogmatize' natural philosophy only refers to the *effects* of bodily motion.<sup>34</sup> This was, however, clearly tantamount to affirming that the Scriptures do not teach any natural philosophy at all, since this particular discipline consists precisely in the attempt to uncover the hidden causes of visible effects. Consequently, Van Velthuysen's pledge to believe the Bible where it does express itself clearly in matters of 'natural and worldly sciences'<sup>35</sup> hardly sounded convincing, to say the least. The real outcome of his *Proof* was quite clear: we should strictly separate philosophical from theological disputes. Philosophers should study nature, theologians should explain the Scriptures, that is investigate the circumstances under which the Word of God was written down for posterity. God, however, did not in vain supply man with his natural abilities. It is only reasonable to let reason decide where and when the Bible uses a figurative way of speech and where, therefore, the real meaning of the text does not coincide with its literal meaning.<sup>36</sup> Thus, as so often happens in

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



this kind of polemical pamphleteering, Van Velthuysen too only laid his cards on the table at the very end of his treatise. For what could be the specifically *theological* nature of interpreting Scripture if it is essentially the philosopher's task to judge the relationship between the Sacred Texts and the circumstances of their historical origins?

This question was put to Van Velthuysen by the aforementioned Jacobus du Bois, a Calvinist minister from Leiden who in 1648 had shortly exchanged letters with Descartes on astronomy.<sup>37</sup> As early as 1655 Du Bois had published a *Naecktheyt Van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie* (Nudity of Cartesian Philosophy Uncovered), in which the ascendancy of Cartesianism was lamented, but in which Du Bois failed to deliver a clear alternative to Van Velthuysen's exegetical programme.<sup>38</sup> Instead he endorsed the arguments Schoock and Voetius had brought forward against Descartes in the 1640s: rather than formulating an alternative biblical hermeneutics, Du Bois concentrated on the status of Philosophy as an academic discipline and the specific merits of *Cartesian* Philosophy. According to him, Philosophy was nothing but an introductory course, designed to prepare university students for their further careers in the higher faculties of Theology, Medicine and Law. In this sense it was to be regarded as the *ancilla Theologiae*. In Du Bois' view Cartesian philosophy was only detrimental to theology, in that it replaced the sound proof for the existence of God from the observation that there has to be a First Cause for the highly questionable ontological proof. Furthermore, Du Bois rejected a number of Cartesian topics which would become habitual targets for the Anticartesians, like Descartes' *hypothèse des tourbillons*, or his view of animals like *automata*, and his distinction between 'infinite' and 'indefinite'.

The main reason why Du Bois did not succeed in formulating a convincing reply to Van Velthuysen's exegetics may well have been Van Velthuysen's use of Calvin's own biblical hermeneutics. Since Van Velthuysen had echoed many of Calvin's own suggestions, he was able to react quickly and confidently to his Calvinist detractors by publishing, in 1656, a second *Proof*.<sup>39</sup> In the preface to this pamphlet Van Velthuysen compared the Cartesian revolution to the Reformation; Cartesianism was spreading so rapidly throughout the learned world

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<sup>37</sup> Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*.

<sup>38</sup> Du Bois, *Naecktheyt Van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie*. A second and third attack on Van Velthuysen's *Bewijs* were launched in [Streso] *Korte Aenmerkingen op het Onbewezen Bewijs* and Streso, *Dissertatio de usu philosophiae inter Christianos*.

<sup>39</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Bewijs*.

that no official condemnation would be able to stop its ultimate victory. The main body of the first part of this second *Proof* consists of a repetition of the arguments from the first *Proof*. Remarkably, he now referred approvingly to Wittichius' *De Stylo Scripturae* (1656), a response to criticism of the earlier *Dissertationes* in which Wittichius once more elaborated on the by now familiar theme of divine accommodation.<sup>40</sup> The second and the third and final part of Van Velthuysen's reply to Du Bois and the anonymous author of some *Korte Aenmerkingen* (Short Remarks) are even more remarkable, in that they reveal the boldness of their author in pushing his earlier findings to their logical yet very disturbing conclusion.

Van Velthuysen started innocently enough by claiming that God's veracity guarantees the reliability of sensory perception. However, one should distinguish between two degrees of certainty. Whatever is mathematically certain, cannot be denied without succumbing to logical contradiction. Moral certainty, on the other hand, comprises both the certainty we have of sensory perception and of reliable witnesses. It is equally absurd to doubt either of these two degrees of certainty.<sup>41</sup> The question which arose from the concluding pages of the first *Proof* as to the specific authority of the theologian is indeed an important one, Van Velthuysen stated. It should be answered by simply admitting that no such specific authority exists. Apart from the *necessaria* that constitute the foundations of Christianity, we have to allow the liberty of discussing the *non-necessaria*. And as the *necessaria* are easily recognized, ministers hold no special authority over their flock.<sup>42</sup> Finally, Van Velthuysen observed that Cartesianism has nothing whatsoever to do with Pelagianism, since the indifference of the will according to Descartes amounts to no more than to the affirmation that the human act of willing is not in any way hindered by God. On the contrary, so Van Velthuysen argued, on account of the Fall each and every act of the will should be deemed a gift of Grace and whatever may be good in these acts stems directly and exclusively from God.<sup>43</sup>

In the third and final part of this second *Proof* Van Velthuysen tried to stress his disagreement with the Socinians, whom he considered to be too eager to explain away the *Mysteria Fidei*. Yet, once again at the very end of this his second pamphlet on biblical hermeneutics,

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. Cf. Van Velthuysen, *Nader Beuys*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Beuys*, 61–65.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 76–79.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 85–89.

Van Velthuysen succeeded in delivering a daring statement on the status of any reading of the Scriptures: in order to discern the meaning of Scripture, he argued, one should follow reason in exactly the same way as one does in interpreting ‘the writings of wise men’. This entails the necessity to become acquainted both with the language used by the prophets and with the ways in which the prophets put their tongue to use.<sup>44</sup>

It is hardly surprising that by this time Du Bois got very angry indeed. Van Velthuysen had even been backed by one J.D.M.L.P., reported to be Johan Anton van den Linden (1609–1664), who was medical professor at the university of Leiden, and a close friend of Cocceius, and had published two poems in which the Calvinist campaign against Cartesianism was severely condemned and the dangers of the ministerial incitement were amply illustrated.<sup>45</sup> So in 1656 Du Bois’ *Schadelickheyd Van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie* (Harmfulness of Cartesian Philosophy) appeared, officially approbated by three pillars of reformed orthodoxy, namely the Utrecht professors of theology Voetius, Nethenus and Essenius. Faced with the challenge of an increasingly confident opponent, Du Bois made a serious attempt to systemize his own hermeneutics. He came up with four rules for admitting figurative readings of the Scriptures:

1. ‘*Cum disparatum praedicatur de disparato*’, then we have to understand one of these *disparata* in a figurative way. (The body of Christ for instance cannot possibly *be* bread.)
2. If a scriptural passage is at odds with the clearly expressed rule of faith in the Bible.
3. If the literal sense of a scriptural passage is plainly absurd.
4. If the intention and the circumstances of the *passus* clearly reject any literal reading.<sup>46</sup>

It goes without saying that this could not possibly convince any Dutch Cartesian, for 1 and 3 seem hard to distinguish, 2 only leads to further, more fundamental questions as to the *contents* of the rule of faith and 4 comes just too close to Van Velthuysen’s own position to be a possible alternative. For the time being the *furor theologicus* would be replaced by a number of scathing attacks on the mathematical pretensions of Du Bois, who in two booklets directed against

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 99–101.

<sup>45</sup> J.D.M.L.P., *Carthesius Renatus*.

<sup>46</sup> Du Bois, *Schadelickheyd Van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie*, 8–10.

Wittichius had tried to demonstrate the scientific deficiencies of Copernicanism.<sup>47</sup> Soon the stage would be dominated by two especially energetic pamphleteers, one ‘Suetonius Tranquillus’ and his opponent ‘Irenaeus Philalethius’. According to a later source, Koelman’s highly partial *Het Vergift van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie* (The Poison of Cartesian Philosophy, 1692), in which Van Velthuysen was presented as one of the most dangerous men of his age, ‘Suetonius’ was none other than Voetius himself and ‘Irenaeus’ had been the pseudonym of Heidanus, the Leiden ringleader of academic Cartesianism.<sup>48</sup> Instructive as their battle of 1656 may have been for the general historiography of Dutch Cartesianism, neither of these authors paid much attention to the matter at hand here. Voetius once more summed up the dangers of Cartesianism as such; Heidanus made fun of outdated notions like ‘substantial forms’ and argued—again—for the necessity to separate philosophy from theology.<sup>49</sup>

Du Bois waited until 1657 before he replied to Du Bois’ *Harmfulness of Cartesian Philosophy*. By this time, however, as we have seen in the previous section, the States of Holland had decreed that this kind of polemics had to end. In view of the way in which this decree had come about, it was only to be expected that the Cartesians regarded it as a victory. Encouraged by the support from Heidanus, the doyen of academic Cartesianism, Van Velthuysen boldly stated in his *Further Proof* that philosophy is anything but the *ancilla Theologiae*. On the contrary, on account of its being ‘natural knowledge’ it reaches into the very heart of theology and, in reverse, the question whether the earth moves around the sun or not is an exclusively

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<sup>47</sup> One was entitled *Dialogus Theologico-Astronomicus*, the other *Veritas et Autoritas Sacra*. For the latter, see Dibon, ‘Scepticisme et orthodoxie réformée’. At least four pamphlets appeared as an immediate result of Du Bois’ astronomical endeavours. J.D.B.[= Du Bois?] *Den Ingetoomden Cartesiaen*; [Essenius?] *Specimen Philosophiae Cartesianae*. The anonymous *Wiskonstigh Bewys der Onnoselheyt van Jacobus du Bois* and I.G.H. *Den Hollenden Astronomus J.D.B. Gecapuchont* were probably the work of Johannes Hudde. See Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*.

<sup>48</sup> Koelman, *Het Vergift van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie*, 466 and 539. Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*, agrees with the identification of Irenaeus, but casts doubt on Koelman’s report on Suetonius.

<sup>49</sup> Tranquillus, *Staet des Geschils*; *Nader Opening Van eenige stucken*; *Den Overtuyghden Cartesiaen* and *Verdedichde Oprechticheyt* (probably not by S.T. himself); Philalethius, *Bedenkingen op den Staet des geschils*; *De Overtuigde Quaetwilligheidt* and *De Verstrickte Astronomus Jacobus Du Boys*. This last pamphlet was directed against the author who in Irenaeus Philalethius ‘De tweede van die naam’ *Den Gebolden Astronomus* had made use of Philalethius’ pseudonym in order to attack Philalethius.

philosophical issue with which theologians should not occupy themselves.<sup>50</sup> Once again, he stressed the consequence of this, namely the entire spuriousness of all special claims of theologians over their subject-matter and his willingness to accept religious dogmata—the *necessaria*—on faith alone, even if they are totally incomprehensible. Further, Van Velthuysen went to great lengths to counter Du Bois' accusations of Socinianism. Socinians, Van Velthuysen pointed out, replace Reason for the Scriptures. This means that they neglect the meaning of Scripture, that is the circumstances from which it originated, which is precisely what he himself purported to avoid and to what Du Bois, according to Van Velthuysen, had succumbed. Once again he tried to summarize his position by formulating a number of rules for scriptural interpretation:

1. One should start by establishing the *necessaria*. This should be done by selecting a number of absolutely unambiguous scriptural texts. These passages should convey a meaning which is evident in relation to a) reason b) the case at hand c) all the relevant circumstances.
2. This collection should be considered to be the standard for all further scriptural research, which should be guided '*secundum analogiam fidei*' (Rom. 12:7).
3. Particular passages which clearly do not touch the fundamentals of biblical faith should not be interpreted by reason but by taking heed of a) their *scopus* b) their circumstances c) the rule of faith.
4. If and only if this is not possible, should reason step in on its own.<sup>51</sup>

However, since reason should not be permitted to play any part in establishing whether biblical texts should be read in a figurative way or not—a surprising statement after the first *Proof!*—we will not risk confusing natural theology and *theologia revelata*. In fact, Du Bois' emphatic insistence on the need to distinguish literal from figurative ways of reading Scripture is precisely why this minister had proved to be so very vulnerable to this particular mistake. Despite this new care on the part of Van Velthuysen not to let reason run wild in its encounter with the Word of God, it is quite clear that he went considerably further than Heidanus. Whereas the latter constantly stressed the need to separate philosophy from theology, Van Velthuysen con-

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<sup>50</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Nader Bewys*, 1 and 37–38.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–44.

tinued to defend the rights of philosophy as an eminently reasonable enterprise.

### 3. *Republican Politics*

We have come a long way from the debates which occupied the first academic Cartesians in the Dutch Republic. Clearly, biblical hermeneutics and the wider issue of the relationship between State and Church were not among the original concerns of Descartes himself, according to whom these issues did not pertain to the professional competence of philosophy. Increasingly, however, his Dutch pupils no longer felt such inhibitions. On the contrary, during the 1660s and 1670s far more radical varieties of Dutch ‘Cartesianism’ were to be launched, no doubt stimulated by the fact that between 1656 and 1661 Descartes’ works appeared *in toto* in Dutch, translated by Jan Hendrik Glazemaker (1619/20–1682).<sup>52</sup> None of these ‘Cartesianisms’ were particularly faithful to Descartes’ intentions. However, they increasingly reflected the political reality during the age of ‘de ware vrijheid’.

It has recently been stated by Rienk Vermij, that the debate between Van Velthuysen and Du Bois is not particularly interesting since from a historical perspective, the validity of Copernicanism was no longer topical by the 1650s. What was at stake here, was not merely, or even primarily the interpretation of *Joshua*, or for that matter, the principles of hermeneutics in general, but rather the role of the church in public life. Indeed, this quarrel ‘should not so much win adherents for the various sides, but define those very sides themselves.’<sup>53</sup> Vermij is right: the debate had nothing to do with the professional study of Scripture in the Republic.<sup>54</sup> It is significant, that Van Velthuysen’s claim, in the second and third *Proofs*, that ministers hold no special authority over their flock nor over the interpretation of the Bible, was to be re-iterated time and again in his later writings. In 1660, he issued a separate treatise on the office of ministers, in which he argued that it is up to *citizens* to appoint ministers, since God did not appoint officials above princes to do so.<sup>55</sup> In fact he went

<sup>52</sup> Thijssen-Schoute, ‘Jan Hendrik Glazemaker’.

<sup>53</sup> Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*.

<sup>54</sup> See De Jonge, *De bestudering van het Nieuwe Testament* and Van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies*.

<sup>55</sup> [Van Velthuysen] *Het Predick-Ampt en 't Recht der Kercke*, 33 ff and 57–69.

even further, believing that as the Church is nothing but a 'political society',<sup>56</sup> it should be presided over by a King, a 'Defender of the Faith'. Clergymen who try to encroach on the liberty of conscience of their believers do so against the natural right of each and every citizen to find his own way to personal salvation.<sup>57</sup> Van Velthuysen also revealed a keen awareness of the purely political perils of religious censorship, stating that neither Catholics nor Jews should be made to suffer the religious fervour of Voetianism, 'because we cannot dispense with their trade'.<sup>58</sup>

Van Velthuysen's arguments in favour of an autonomous, secular practice of philosophy, helped define the position of Cartesianism in the Dutch Republic. What is more, he also seems to have been a key-figure in the social construction of the Cartesian faction. As a matter of fact, his sudden change of heart, relating to Wittichius' use of the principle of accommodation, was probably a direct result of a deliberate effort to close ranks. For early in 1656 Van Velthuysen had received a letter from Wittichius, who at the time held a chair at Nijmegen: 'The common cause we are defending for the propagation of truth, against which its opponents are resisting powerfully, seems to demand that we and all cultivators of the true philosophy keep mutual friendship and consult each other regularly on our business.'<sup>59</sup> What is more, Wittichius had evidently asked a fellow-Cartesian, the Leiden professor Johannes de Raey to present Van Velthuysen with a copy of his *De Stylo Scripturae*, and expressly requested of his new-found friend not to accentuate mutual differences. He even went so far as to ask him to take up his cause:

I have seen that our common opponent Du Bois in the work he has written against you occasionally mentions my name as well, and slanders my reputation among the illiterate. It is not fitting, nor allowed, for me to answer in Dutch. So I would ask you, whether you, in the answer you are preparing, will occasionally take on my defence.<sup>60</sup>

To return to the arguments involved, however, it is one thing to argue as the academics Wittichius and De Raey were doing, in favour

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–115. See also [Van Velthuysen] *Ondersoek of de Christelijcke Overheydt eenigh quaedt in haer gebiedt mach toe laten*, Chapters 6 and 10 and Van Velthuysen, *Tractaet van de Afgoderye en Superstitie*, 7 ff, 90 ff and 111 ff, where it is argued that churches are nothing but voluntary associations of believers, whose leadership can lay no claim to any divine prerogative whatsoever.

<sup>58</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Tractaet van de Afgoderye*, 130–131.

<sup>59</sup> Vermij, *Copernicanism in the Dutch Republic*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

of a strict separation between philosophy and theology, subsequently calling for submission of the Church to the State is quite another. The first argument was perfectly Cartesian, the second line of reasoning was part of a completely different tradition, going back to Grotius. During the 1650s and 1660s, this Erastian attitude was to become increasingly associated with the work of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), a far more radical political philosopher than Grotius had ever been. Curiously, the ‘Cartesian’ character of Hobbes’ *politica* seems to have been taken for granted by Dutch philosophers of the time, as was first suggested by Van Velthuysen’s preface to his apology of *De civie* from 1651. According to Van Velthuysen, no other philosopher had accomplished for politics what Hobbes had, namely putting the entire edifice of political philosophy into doubt, in order to provide unquestionable principles from which a new science of politics was to be deduced. Apparently, Hobbes’ views were perceived as supplying the political philosophy Descartes had failed to deliver.

Van Velthuysen was not the only Utrecht Cartesian to write on politics, for in 1657 one Gerard van Wassenaer published in his home-town *Bedekte konsten in regeringen en heerschappien* (Covert arts in governments and masteries). Van Wassenaer was a lawyer with many Arminian contacts, including Grotius with whom he corresponded. More importantly, Van Wassenaer had a son, Peter, who studied with the first Utrecht Cartesian professor Regius at the time when the latter published his famous *Fundamenta physices*. In fact, it was Petrus Wassenaer, whose publication of part of the twelfth chapter of this particular book, provoked Descartes to issue his *Notae in programma quoddam* of 1648.<sup>61</sup> And it was probably due to his son’s acquaintance with Regius, that Gerard van Wassenaer in his *Bedekte konsten* included a fair amount of Cartesian psychology. On the face of it, *Bedekte konsten* is a rather traditional essay, predominantly in the style of Tacitus and conceived in the tradition of *raison d’état*. On the basis of endless quotations from classical authorities such as Livy, Seneca, and Tacitus, the author reveals the various ‘arts’ employed by the king, the nobility, and the people respectively to further their own causes. The second part of this book, however, dealing with the principles of human behaviour in general, contains substantial—verbal—repetitions of Regius’ *Fundamenta physices*, including Regius’ ‘materialist’ neglect of metaphysics and his denial of innate ideas. *Bedekte konsten* is an important book not merely because it attempts to

<sup>61</sup> Verbeek, ‘Le contexte historique des *Notae in programma quoddam*’.



apply a 'Cartesian' psychology to political theory, far more interesting is the recently discovered fact that Van Wassenaer's book was copied completely and re-issued by one V.D.H. under the title *Naeuwkeurige Consideratie Van Staet* (Precise Consideration Of State).<sup>62</sup>

Until recently, *Naeuwkeurige Consideratie Van Staet* was generally held to have been the work of Pieter van den Hove, also known as Pieter de la Court (1618–1685), the author of such classics of Dutch republicanism as the *Interest van Holland* (1662), *Consideratien en exempelen van staet* or *Politike weegschaal* (Political Balance, 1660, re-issued in 1661 and 1662) and *Politike Discoursen* (1662). Pieter and his brother Johan, who until his death in 1660 played a major part in preparing the publications of 'V.D.H.', both studied in Leiden and Utrecht in the 1640s. Sons-in-law of Heereboord and former students of Regius, they developed into fully-committed Cartesians.<sup>63</sup> As rich cloth manufacturers, operating at least in the vicinity of the Leiden trade aristocracy, they became the most prominent theoreticians of the States Party. In fact, Johan de Witt is generally held to have personally contributed to *Interest van Holland*, of which he wrote chapters 29 and 30.<sup>64</sup>

Johan and Pieter now turned to Descartes and to Hobbes in order to outline a political philosophy, the task of which, in the words of Noel Malcolm 'was seen as that of constructing the state as a mechanism to regulate the passions of individuals and force both rulers and ruled to identify their individual interests with the common good.'<sup>65</sup> The analysis of this balance by the De la Courts conveys a highly eclectic attitude: starting from Cartesian premisses, according to which the passions as such are harmless, they in many places reveal a Stoic distrust of the passions. This enabled them to combine their 'Cartesian' psychology with Hobbes' radically realistic anthropology. To be more precise: since the passions, according to De la Court can only be rationally controlled by the construction of a balance, which

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<sup>62</sup> V.D.H., *Naeuwkeurige Consideratie Van Staet*. See Haitsma Mulier, 'De *Naeuwkeurige consideratie van staet*'.

<sup>63</sup> On their background, see Van Tijn, 'Pieter de la Court'. See also Blom en Wildenberg (red.) *Pieter de la Court in zijn tijd* and Wildenberg, *Johan & Pieter de la Court*.

<sup>64</sup> Rowen, *John de Witt*, 391–398. It should be added that De Witt differed in opinion on several economic matters, and resented Pieter's lack of diplomacy. For after Pieter de la Courts's settlement in Amsterdam, in 1666, he issued a second edition of the *Interest* to which he restored the parts that had been cautiously removed by De Witt.

<sup>65</sup> Malcolm, 'Hobbes and Spinoza', 547.

was to be achieved in a state, it was Hobbes' contractualism which seemed to explain both the existence and the ends of the state.<sup>66</sup> In particular Hobbes' emphasis on man's innate egoism, resulting from the fundamental drive towards self-preservation, which in turn demands the establishment of absolute sovereignty received a highly topical application by De la Court, who used this line of reasoning to exclude the Stadholder from any claim on the necessarily undivided sovereignty of the States.<sup>67</sup> Along similar lines the clergy was excluded from curtailing individual liberty of conscience—just as Van Velthuysen had argued earlier.

In the *Politike Discoursen*, De la Court noted that religion is highly beneficial for the state, but *not* necessary, because there are 'Indians and heretics' who have done very well without religion.<sup>68</sup> De la Court's main reason why the States should control the Church, is the danger of civil war, resulting from theological disputes. Since man, during his evolvement from a natural to a civil state did not hand over 'his right or power to believe what he feels to be true' and since it would be cruel 'to order something which cannot be obeyed', it is clear 'that the government by the laws of nature is kept to allow freedom of conscience to all its subjects who are willing to obey.'<sup>69</sup> Once this fact had been established, however, De la Court needed to make sure that it would not lead to religious or to political strife. He did so by way of a general prohibition of any attempt to conversion—curiously founded on man's natural right to self-preservation. In De la Court's eyes, missionary activities fall short of *obedience*:

To be sure, no man is ordered to love his neighbour more than he loves himself. What is more, the sentiment of wanting to teach one's neighbour in matters of religion can and should be punished, since it breaks the peace which the government by nature should keep.<sup>70</sup>

Should attempts at conversion not be prohibited, man would rapidly fall back to the state of nature. Moreover, De la Court continued, toleration pays: countries which allow the practice of various religions prosper. In *Interest van Holland*, this principle was specifically applied

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<sup>66</sup> Kossmann, *Politieke theorie in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland*, 38–40; Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 131–133 and 'The Language of Seventeenth-Century Republicanism'.

<sup>67</sup> V.H., *Consideratien van Staet*, 13–33. See Van der Bijl, 'Pieter de la Court en de politieke werkelijkheid'.

<sup>68</sup> D.C., *Politike Discoursen*, IV, 19.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 22.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 23.

to the Republic. Sadly, De la Court argued, our unequalled religious toleration has been curbed somewhat since the events of 1618, which were both unreasonable and ‘damaging’ to the economy.<sup>71</sup>

It would be a mistake, I feel, to regard De la Court as a profound philosopher. Clearly, he was not. His use of Hobbes’ analysis of sovereignty, for instance, is strangely at odds with his praise of Dutch freedom.<sup>72</sup> His relevance lies elsewhere, for instance in his conception of the state as a barrel of passions, in which reason will only prevail when the passions somehow neutralize *each other*. This conception would become very influential, just like his insistence on the need to construct a state in which the interests of the ruler convene with those of the subjects. He is interesting also for his almost complete lack of interest in matters theological, and his obvious contempt for the Calvinist ministry. Looking for the reasons of Christian zealotry, De la Court described how, by the adulation of their flock, ministers are naturally tempted to regard their own particular interpretation of Scripture as infallible, and superior to what any secular authority may decree. The anonymous author of *De Iure Ecclesiasticorum* (1665) agreed wholeheartedly with this, and stressed the need to control the political ambitions of the *servants* of the Church, whose only claim to power rested with the secular authorities who appointed them.<sup>73</sup> According to De la Court, similar motives have inspired the clergy throughout the centuries to slander the practitioners of philosophy, medicine, and mathematics.<sup>74</sup> And De la Court was not ready to put up with such arrogance. As the Dutch historian Eco Haitsma Mulier put it, he reduced Christianity to ‘a means for justifying the government’s ability to inflict punishment’.<sup>75</sup>

Pieter de la Court was not the only citizen of Leiden to combine a fascination with the philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes with an outspoken membership of the States Party, and a deep-felt dis-

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<sup>71</sup> V.D.H., *Interest van Holland*, 42–43. See the English translation of *Aanwijzing der heilsame politieke gronden* (1669), which is the extended version of *Interest van Holland: The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic*, 80–82. According to the title-page, this book had been written by ‘John de Witt, and other Great Men in Holland’.

<sup>72</sup> Geyl, *Het stadhouderschap in de partijliteratuur*, 29. See, however, also Kossmann, *Politieke theorie in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland*, 42 note 3 and 46–50.

<sup>73</sup> D.C., *Politieke Discoursen*, IV, 33–36; Constans, *De Iure Ecclesiasticorum*, Preface, 11.p.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 36–41.

<sup>75</sup> Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 125. De la Court’s anti-clericalism is all the more striking in view of his deep interest in theology as a young man. See Frijhoff, ‘Pieter de la Courts reisjournaal’.

trust of the political ambitions of the Calvinist clergy. By the 1660s, in Holland in particular, it had become quite fashionable to mock ministers.<sup>76</sup> The Zeeland-born medical doctor Abraham van Berkel (1639–1686), who must have been on good terms with the members of the Leiden patriciate such as the De la Courts, and who made a living as rector and conrector of various grammar schools throughout the Republic, in 1665 issued an anonymous translation of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio medici*.<sup>77</sup> Two years later he published his translation of Hobbes' *Leviathan*.<sup>78</sup> Both texts provoked furious reactions, which was only to be expected in view of the very nature of these works, and of the particular way in which they were presented to the Dutch audience. The preface to Van Berkel's rendering of the *Religio medici*, composed by Van Berkel's friend and former teacher Jan Rampius, added insult to injury in such lines as the following:

There are certainly a thousand willing to climb into the pulpit who wish to pass for respectable theologians, and have also been promoted Doctors of this most worthy and profound mystery, and who, though exercising all the powers of their minds have never arrived at such noble and excellent meditations as this physican.<sup>79</sup>

Van Berkel's sympathy for De Witt's States Party is even more evident in the preface to the *Leviathan*, where he praised Hobbes for his insights into the nature of 'sovereignty and Lawful Government' and strongly condemned William II's coup of 1650, when the then Prince of Orange had laid siege on Amsterdam:

if that whole bunch of profligate soldiers and other warlike men and subjects had known to whom they owned their loyalty and obedience, and had thought of those who paid and had to pay them daily, they would never have girded on their weapons against the most flourishing trading town not only of Holland but of all Europe.<sup>80</sup>

Yet Van Berkel's avowed allegiance to the States did not suffice to keep him out of danger. And despite his responsibility for these two translations *not* being common knowledge — the very well-informed Jacob Koelman, who did note the affinity between the translations of Browne and Hobbes,<sup>81</sup> remained in the dark —, he left Leiden in 1666, and stayed until 1669 in the free town of Culemborg in Gelder-

<sup>76</sup> Schilling, 'Afkeer van domineesheerschappij'.

<sup>77</sup> Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind*, 1–28.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–62.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>81</sup> Koelman, *Wederlegging van B. Bekkers Betoverde Wereld*, 143–144.

land, which fell under the jurisdiction of the count of Waldeck. Van Berkel, however, was not even the most radical supporter of De Witt, nor the most loyal one. After the removal of De Witt and the reinstatement of the Stadholder, he turned into a warm supporter of William III. In fact, there is every reason to doubt the depth of Van Berkel's republicanism. Recently, Michael Petry, commenting on Hobbes' political philosophy, observed that it was his policy

to support whatever power was capable of preventing civil strife, and his Dutch interpreters, almost without exception, seem to have found little reason to disagree with him on the point. Although they backed De Witt during the 1650s and 1660s because they approved of his intellectual predilections, his republicanism and his statemanship, they also did so because he supported their commercial interests and held effective sway over the fate of the country. Once he had fallen from power, however, once the prince of Orange had been called in to save the state from dissolution, the principle of republicanism was of less interest.<sup>82</sup>

At this stage, a short note on recent research on Dutch seventeenth-century political thought might be in place, since recently much has been written on the European context of Dutch republicanism. The rediscovery of foreign republican traditions has dominated the work of such prominent and influential historians as J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner.<sup>83</sup> Republicanism itself has inspired contemporary political philosophers such as Philip Pettit.<sup>84</sup> It was only to be expected that the question of the 'Dutchness' of Dutch republicanism would appear on the agenda. Most experts agree with E.H. Kossmann's assessment that there is a decisive coherence to be discerned in the efforts of Van Velthuysen, De la Court and Spinoza in particular. But in which sense were these authors dependent on foreign intellectual traditions and how does their work relate to what Pocock has termed the 'Florentine' and the 'Atlantic' republican traditions? Or how does it relate to what Quentin Skinner prefers to identify as the 'neo-Roman' view on political liberty?<sup>85</sup> Closely related is, of

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<sup>82</sup> Petry, 'Hobbes and the Early Dutch Spinozists', 157.

<sup>83</sup> Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* and *Machiavelli*; Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State*.

<sup>84</sup> Pettit, *Republicanism*.

<sup>85</sup> Kossmann, *Politieke theorie in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland*; 'Dutch Republicanism' and 'Popular Sovereignty'; Pocock, 'Spinoza and Harrington'; Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice* and 'The Language of Seventeenth-Century Republicanism'; Van Gelderen, 'The Machiavellian Moment'; Schilling, 'Dutch Republicanism in its Historical Context'; Blom, *Morality and Causality in Politics*; Rosenthal, *Spinoza in the*

course, the question of the continuity of Dutch republicanism. Did it only take off during the Stadholderless age, or should we look for its origins in the many pamphlets and treatises written during the Revolt itself?<sup>86</sup> Finally, one might wonder precisely to what extent Pieter de la Court and Spinoza actually agreed with De Witt's policies. These matters may all be of great concern to experts of what is commonly referred to as the History of Political Thought, to the historian of Philosophy proper, other developments during the Stadholderless age are of more immediate relevance, however.<sup>87</sup> During the second half of the 1660s, the philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes were to inspire far more daring and far more principled thinkers in Amsterdam. They combined their political interest with an exceptionally critical assessment of the reformed tradition, and were to become notorious mainly for their theological heterodoxy.

Before we discuss Spinoza's 'circle', however, the most interesting question raised by this exciting period in Dutch philosophy needs to be dealt with, namely, *why* Cartesianism, including its more radical varieties, for a time so appealed to the non-academic philosophers we have discussed. The usual explanation for Descartes' success seems hardly appropriate here. Familiar facts such as the inability of Aristotelianism to incorporate the shift in cosmology from a geo- to a heliocentric paradigm, and its dependence on obsolete notions like 'substantial form' and its related conception of causality were of course essential to the gradual erosion of Aristotle's authority throughout the learned world. The unique advantage of Cartesianism as a philosophical system, meanwhile, was its ability to serve as a framework for the sciences in general, which enabled it for a while to harbour the latest developments in such diverse subjects as mathematics, medicine, and astronomy. Yet all this hardly seems to matter much in relation to the theologico-political *discours* of the 1650s and 1660s, from which Spinozism emerged. Many Dutch *professors* must have been particularly pleased with the Cartesian separation of philosophy from theology. To the Van Velthuysens in the Dutch

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*Republican Tradition.*

<sup>86</sup> Mout, 'Van arm vaderland tot eendrachtige Republiek' and 'Ideales Muster oder erfundene Eigenart'; Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*.

<sup>87</sup> This is not to deny that in particular the so-called 'Cambridge'-methodology in the History of Political Thought, which is characterized by a radically contextual approach to historical texts, should be welcomed by other intellectual historians. See Pocock, 'The Concept of Language and the *Métier d'historien*'; Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' and 'Freedom and the Historian'.

Republic, however, the appeal of this separation must literally have remained largely academic. Their republican divorce of the authorities of State and Church was only distantly related to Descartes' separation of philosophy and theology.

Descartes' reputation as a *mathematician*, however, and his exciting promise to deliver the groundworks for an explanation of the entire physical universe which would provide a degree of certainty and indubitability hitherto only achieved in geometry must have had a particular appeal to both academic and non-academic Dutch scientists and philosophers who had been raised in a culture which had learnt to appreciate this particular discipline. As we have seen in the first chapter, at least since the latter half of the sixteenth century, mathematics had flourished in the Low Countries, particularly in such vital areas as (military) architecture, surveying, cartography and shipping. The young Republic was at war with the largest empire the Western world had seen since that of Rome, and this war was paid for by a rapidly expanding trade economy, largely dependent on a magnificent fleet. In view of the crucial role of (applied) mathematics in the military and economic triumphs of the Republic, we may safely assume that the educated élite of this new nation was in an excellent position to recognise the particular significance of mathematics among the sciences. Indeed, apart from the fact that Descartes' encounter, in 1619, with Isaac Beeckman was crucial in the development of his *mathesis universalis*, the Dutch Republic was instrumental in establishing the Frenchman's fame as the most important mathematician of his day, since it was the Leiden professor Franciscus van Schooten who saw to it that Descartes' rather sketchy *Géométrie* was polished and published in Latin.

By its Dutch admirers, the mathematical thrust of Cartesianism was largely to be employed metaphorically. It seems to have been this particular development which played a key-role in the dissemination of Cartesianism among 'amateur' philosophers. To appreciate this point, we must first return to the standard account of the spreading of Cartesianism on the European Continent, for it is remarkable that one of the key-elements in the habitual explanation of the appeal of Cartesianism seems virtually absent from the Dutch situation. The 'Popkin-Schmitt'-hypothesis regarding the revival of scepticism in the second half of the sixteenth century will be only too familiar, and it has become a standard element in the assessment both of Descartes' personal ambition and of the success of his teaching, to refer to Descartes' allegedly successful mastering of the 'Pyrrhonist'

challenge.<sup>88</sup> However, before the rise of Cartesianism, the Dutch Republic at no stage in its intellectual history seems to have undergone anything like a sceptical crisis. Scepticism does not seem to have concerned its philosophers at all. One could, nonetheless, point to a phenomenon similar to the epistemological scepticism, allegedly raging in France, which may have inspired several heterodox Cartesians to rush in where Descartes himself had feared to tread.

At first sight, the efforts of such natural philosophers as Heereboord and De Raey, let alone those of Van Schooten and his pupils including Huygens, Hudde and De Witt, who were genuine mathematicians, had little in common with the issues that during the second half of the seventeenth century were put on the agenda by 'Cartesians' such as Van Velthuysen and De la Court, and the 'Spinozists' that we shall deal with shortly. Collectively, their work appears to reflect first and foremost a deep felt uneasiness not so much about the foundations of human knowledge, as about the conditions of political stability, about the internal coherence, that is, of the Republic, which since the early days of the Revolt had been constantly under threat both by the religious diversity of its inhabitants and by the absence of a strong central government.

It seems no coincidence that none of the non-academic Dutch Cartesians failed to stress first and foremost Descartes' mathematical expertise and the *certainty*, which his way of doing philosophy was able to produce. Cartesianism seems to have been understood by its non-academic supporters as a potentially *unifying* force. Although the Republic did extremely well during the 1650s and 1660s, its educated classes seem to have been haunted by the fear that, as Lipsius had already put it in the early 1590s, the Republic might not be able to afford religious pluriformity, and by the recognition that the lack of coherence of the not so United Provinces might, in the end, turn out to be fatal. How wonderful it would be if the theological and political insecurities of life in the Republic could be solved once and for all in the 'clear and distinct' fashion Descartes had formulated his famous laws of collision! For those who did not appreciate the cultural offensive of the Voetians, Cartesianism and to some even Spinozism, for a time at least, must indeed have looked a feasible option.

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<sup>88</sup> Three key-titles: Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*; Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus*; Popkin and Schmitt (eds.) *Scepticism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### SPINOZA: FRIENDS AND FOES

#### 1. *Spinoza's 'Circle'*

In the second chapter we saw how from the 1650s onwards, Dutch Cartesianism was increasingly associated with the theology of Cocceius. From a reformed perspective, Cocceianism was perfectly orthodox, and held on to the strict separation of theology and philosophy. The persistence of the Cartesio-Cocceian alliance—which at Leiden was to endure until well into the eighteenth century—did not succeed in preventing a number of non-academic ‘Cartesians’ from stretching the boundaries of philosophy, and infiltrating the domain of theology more and more. This development, which had been dreaded by the Voetians from the very introduction of Cartesianism, first came to the fore in the ongoing debate on the interpretation of Scripture.

In 1666 the anonymous publication, in Amsterdam, of the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* revived the Dutch debate on Cartesian exegetics. It marked a decisive moment in the history of Dutch Cartesianism.<sup>1</sup> Its author, Lodewijk Meyer (1629–1681), was a man of many talents. Born in Amsterdam in 1629, he matriculated at Leiden university in 1654. Relatively late he acquired his doctorate both in medicine and in philosophy by defending two rather common theses entitled *De calido ratio ejusque morbis*, and *De materia, ejusque affectionibus motus et quiete*.<sup>2</sup> As a young man, Meyer was only one of many committed Cartesians arguing that natural objects behave the way they do on account of three principles only: matter, motion and rest—and repeating what by this time must have sounded far from revolutionary, ‘*nulla datur forma substantialis*’. As a student, Meyer also wrote poetry, a play, and edited a Dutch dictio-

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<sup>1</sup> For a translation, see Meyer, *La Philosophie interprète de l'Écriture sainte*, éd. Lagrée et Moreau. See most recently: Walther, ‘Biblische Hermeneutik und historische Erklärung’.

<sup>2</sup> Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, 372–386; *De materia* has been published in *Chronicon Spinozanum* 2 (1922), 183–195.

nary, which would be re-issued repeatedly under his own name until the early nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In the preface of this *Woordenschat*, Meyer endorsed Stevin's efforts to create a pure Dutch, untainted by foreign influences. He also sought to realize this goal as a director of the Amsterdam Theatre and president of *Nil volentibus arduum*, an artistic society, founded in 1669 with the aim to purge the Dutch stage from spectacular but cheap theatrical effects and uncontrolled outbursts of emotional frenzy.<sup>4</sup> Champions of French Classicism, the members of *Nil* were to dominate Dutch literary culture until well into the eighteenth century, to the grief, it should be noted, of many literary historians (who, for instance, have argued that instead of slavishly endorsing Corneille's and Racine's poetics, *Nil* should rather have capitalized on the originality of the later Vondel).<sup>5</sup>

For our purposes, Meyer matters mainly because of his *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres*, which was published three years prior to the foundation of *Nil*. (A Dutch translation appeared in 1667.) The argument of the *Interpres* is treacherously simple. In the epilogue, Meyer lists the advantages of his proposal, the chief one being that by turning philosophy into the interpreter of Scripture, the disputes which so 'violently and brutally' have divided Christianity, at long last will be overcome 'for ever'. To put it differently: religious strife being one of the main causes of political discord, and religious division arising from the different ways in which the Bible can be read, we must surely recognize that once Christianity manages to agree on a single, univoqual interpretation of Scripture, a major cause of political turmoil will definitively be removed. The main reason why so far this method of interpreting the Bible has not been properly identified, according to Meyer, lies in the fact that until now *theologians* have occupied themselves with biblical exegetics, whilst until recently philosophy—except for the 'mathematicians'—too was hopelessly divided.<sup>6</sup>

In the sixth chapter of the *Interpres*, Meyer explains why the interpretation of the Scriptures should be taken over by philosophy, which he defines as 'vera, certa, ac indubita Rerum notitia, ac

<sup>3</sup> Meyer, *Woordenschat*. Cf. Van der Wal, *De moedertaal centraal*, 88–90 and 94–96; Van Hardeveld, *Lodewijk Meyer (1629–1681) als lexicograaf*.

<sup>4</sup> See Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, 407–431; Dongelmans, *Nil volentibus arduum*; Harmsen, *Onderwijs in de tooneel-poëzy*; Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's Ethica from Manuscript to Print*, 103–127.

<sup>5</sup> Smit, *Van Noah tot Pascha*, III, 591–594; Konst, *Woedende wraakghierigheid*, 56–72 and 149–162.

<sup>6</sup> [Meyer] *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres*, Epilogue.

principiis naturae lumine cognitis deducta, atque apodicticè demonstrata.<sup>7</sup> ‘Certain’ and ‘indubitable’ being the operative words here, it must have been the *unifying* potential of Cartesianism which spurred Meyer to argue that philosophy will necessarily enforce consent even in theology, since it is based on foundations which simply cannot be questioned, and are ‘mathematically’ deduced from these principles and therefore equally impervious to doubt. In true Dutch Cartesian fashion, Meyer then briefly sketched a History of Philosophy, in which the conceptual confusion among the ‘Scholastics’ is unfavourably compared to the ‘Platonist’ tradition—Justinus Martyr, Dionysius the Areopagite, Origen ‘and others’ would surely have agreed with me, Meyer claimed.<sup>8</sup> Only in this century, Meyer continued, has ‘the light of Cartesian philosophy’ started to clear up the darkness covering theology. In the last part of this crucial chapter Meyer embarked on the very issue which ten years earlier had occupied Van Velthuysen and Du Bois, the question of divine accommodation. Meyer accepted this principle as a matter of fact. No theologian of sound mind will call it into question, he mused, but since Scripture itself nowhere indicates where it does speak *ad caput vulgi*, and where it does not, it is exclusively up to philosophy to decide ‘by the light of nature’ which elements in the text can be attributed to God and which should be accounted for by His accommodating Grace.<sup>9</sup> The ‘reformed’ solution to interpret the Bible *sui ipsius* simply does not hold, since it necessarily presupposes the use of natural reason.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, a Cartesian like Van Velthuysen must have been shocked by the recognition that Meyer’s work could easily be read as the logical outcome of the line of thought he himself had initiated in his debate with the Voetians. Meyer now stated explicitly what constantly had lurked behind Van Velthuysen’s *Proofs*: the only way to definitively put an end to religious disagreements is to let philosophy, that is reason, take over scriptural interpretation. Meyer boldly brushed aside traditional *mysteria fidei* like the *creatio ex nihilo*, the Eucharist, and the Trinity, which according to him would have to be regarded as the product of human prejudice, based on misapprehensions concerning the highly obscure language in which the Bible had been written. In fact, as soon as Van Velthuysen realized

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>10</sup> See also Chapters 10–13.

that he no longer headed the vanguard of Cartesianism, and that Meyer's radical 'Cartesianism' did indeed affect the *contents* of the Christian faith, he on the one hand tried to redefine his own brand of Cartesianism and on the other simply had to make sure that it would not be identified with Meyer's exegetical radicalism. Consequently, Van Velthuysen in 1668 published a *Dissertatio de usu rationis in rebus theologicis*<sup>11</sup> in which he immediately started to stress once again the 'unica regula' of logical thought, which he defined as the need to accept only as truth whatever we perceive clearly and distinctly.<sup>12</sup>

Since philosophy is the discipline in which we exclusively use natural reason for the investigation of questions which can only be solved by the use of natural reason, it must be 'prior' to theology, which in its quest for the true meaning of the Scriptures can only decide over the truth of its own findings by comparing them to the body of knowledge we have already gathered philosophically. Nevertheless, Van Velthuysen went to great lengths to stress what might perhaps be dubbed the unity of rational discourse: both in philosophy and in theology we will always have to make use of the same *ratio*.<sup>13</sup>

He tried to dissociate himself from the message of the *Interpres*, firstly by reconsidering the relation between reason and faith, and secondly by attacking the main thesis of Meyer's book as it was captured in its title. The fundamental difference between reason and faith, according to this *Dissertatio*, is that faith always relies on testimony, be it divine or human. *Ratio recta*, which is identical to '*Philosophia vera*', and to 'natural knowledge', simply has to judge whether any testimony is intelligible. True articles of faith such as the *duplex natura* of Christ, however, have nothing in common with the principles of human rationality and are adhered to on the basis of the testimony of a divine prophet.<sup>14</sup> Yet the question whether or not a prophecy has indeed originated from divine inspiration can and must be investigated by reason. Thus, according to Van Velthuysen, we are capable of rational faith, and only thus can we counter the enthusiastic consequences of overstressing the results for man of the Fall.

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<sup>11</sup> I have not been able to trace a copy of this first edition in the Netherlands. Consequently, I had to rely on the version printed in Van Velthuysen's *Opera* from 1680: *Dissertatio de Usu Rationis in Rebus Theologicis*, in: *Opera Omnia*, I, 96–159.

<sup>12</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Dissertatio*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 102 and 104.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 108–109.

One naturally wonders how we are in fact to investigate the divine origin of prophetic utterances? Van Velthuysen seems to argue, that we should do so by examining the several ways in which God shows His will to man. God either imbues His will directly on the human mind or He reveals Himself by way of ‘words and signs’.<sup>15</sup> Van Velthuysen fully accepted the necessity of divine grace—‘without grace, man is unable to grasp the mysteries of faith’—, yet in his opinion grace only serves to supplement a *moral impotence*.<sup>16</sup> Grace should not be identified with the light itself through which we grasp the *necessaria* of faith, it is God’s way to make us want to understand the ultimate foundation of biblical truth.<sup>17</sup> The most important way in which God reveals Himself, is through verbal signs. Hence God should be deemed to work either *in* or *through* man in order to show His Will, and thus, Van Velthuysen returned to the subject of his earlier pamphlets, namely the need to distinguish the *verus sensus* of the Scriptures, understood as verbal signs written down by men who were used by God as tools for revealing Himself to mankind.<sup>18</sup>

Van Velthuysen’s second difference of opinion with the author of the *Interpres*, concerns the role reason should play in establishing the *verus sensus* of Scripture. Reason, Van Velthuysen argued, should not be regarded as the exclusive ‘principle’ of exegetics, but as its principal ‘instrument’. Although reason informs us about the *possibilities* of biblical ‘true sense’—since this sense will have to be gathered on the basis of the knowledge we already have acquired—its *contents* can only be accepted by faith in what might be obscure, but what on account of God’s essential truthfulness cannot be *contra rationem*.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, in the case of Jesus holding up a lump of bread and declaring it to be His ‘body’, reason tells us that the true sense of this occurrence cannot be identical to its literal sense. Yet what precisely the *true* sense of this event might be, ‘cannot be grasped by reason, but should be taken from Scripture.’<sup>20</sup>

Apart from the issue of whether we can accept this as a convincing alternative to the *Interpres*, Cornelia Thijssen-Schoute seems to have been very mistaken indeed when in her history of Dutch Cartesianism she wrote that Van Velthuysen considered himself to

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

be an ally of Meyer's.<sup>21</sup> Van Velthuysen had been quite emphatic and the method of letting the Bible explain itself, in Van Velthuysen's eyes, is clear enough; we only have to compare the various ways in which it speaks about matters such as faith, election, justification, and so forth, in order to discover the true sense of these terms in the various passages they occur. Van Velthuysen even went so far as to affirm Meyer's claim that the Scriptures cannot explain themselves, was an 'absurdity'.<sup>22</sup> He readily admitted that there are a number of instances in which there is no need to have Scripture interpret itself.<sup>23</sup> Never, however, can reason serve as '*normam veritatis Divinae*', for this would imply submitting the Holy Spirit to the limited abilities of man.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Van Velthuysen regarded himself as the '*mordicus*' defender of scriptural authority against Meyer, '*qui negat Scripturam esse sui interpretem*'.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, Van Velthuysen was not the first Dutchman to react so violently to the *Interpres*. Within a few years of publication, a whole string of refutations in Franeker, Groningen, Utrecht, and Amsterdam appeared.<sup>26</sup> One critic, the mystical chiliast Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669), who was a continental ally of the English millenarians John Dury and Samuel Hartlib, and one of the best known Dutch philo-semites of the age, did not hesitate to proclaim that Meyer's book was simply another indication of the imminent End of the World.<sup>27</sup> According to Serrarius, biblical prophecies had warned of the increasing confidence in the self-sufficiency of natural reason, heralding the Second Coming, and any attempt to understand Scripture without the aid of a *testimonium internum S. Spiritus* was doomed from the start.

The extent to which the scholarly world was shocked by Meyer's attempt to disturb the balance between theology and philosophy, as it had been struck by such professional theologians as Wittichius, and an 'amateur' as Van Velthuysen, became particularly clear from the way in which Louis Wolzogen's refutation of the *Interpres* was

<sup>21</sup> Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme*, 400–401.

<sup>22</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Dissertatio*, 136–137.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 144–145.

<sup>26</sup> For an exhaustive treatment of the entire debate, see Bordoli, *Ragione e Scrittura tra Descartes e Spinoza*.

<sup>27</sup> Serrarius, *Responsio ad exercitationem paradoxam anonymi cujusdam*. The same year a Dutch translation was issued. See Van der Wall, 'Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669) et l'interprétation de l'Écriture'.

treated. A minister of the *église walonne*, professor of Church History at Utrecht, and according to hostile rumour quite an aristocratic *bon vivant*,<sup>28</sup> Wolzogen (1633–1690) was a member of the so-called ‘College der Scavanten’, a Utrecht circle of friends, some of them professors like Wolzogen, De Bruyn, Van Mansvelt, and Graevius, others influential citizens like Van Velthuysen. The members of this ‘college’ shared a definite sympathy for Cartesianism, and an even greater aversion to the Voetianism so powerful in their home-town.<sup>29</sup> Just like Van Velthuysen, Wolzogen deemed it necessary to condemn the *Interpres*, as a far too radical manifestation of Cartesianism, in what was a very balanced book. However, to the second edition he added a scathing attack on the pietist cult-leader Jean de Labadie (1610–1674). This caused a further reaction from the Voetians, who accused Wolzogen of being far too lenient in his judgement over the *Interpres*.<sup>30</sup> Significantly, Abraham Heidanus took up the cause of academic Cartesianism, writing an *Advijs* of the Leiden faculty of theology, in which, of course, the *Interpres* was shown to be not Cartesian at all, but the deplorable product of a rogue.<sup>31</sup>

This rogue, however, was only one of a group of Amsterdam free-thinkers. None of these *franc-tireurs* was as radical as Adriaan Koerbagh (1632/33–1669), and none of them paid the price he would.<sup>32</sup> For in 1669 Koerbagh was to die in the Amsterdam *rasphuis*, after having been found guilty of blasphemy by the magistrate of his home-town. Together with his brother Johannes he went up to Utrecht in 1653, and to Leiden in 1656. Adriaan became a doctor of medicine and law, whereas Johannes prepared for a career in the church. A proper Cartesian, Adriaan in 1664 published a pamphlet on the sovereignty of the States of Holland, in which the Hobbesian submission of the religious to the civil authorities was reiterated, more or less along the lines drawn earlier by Pieter de la Court.<sup>33</sup> Adriaan was typical also on account of his interest in furthering the

<sup>28</sup> *Het Collegie der Scavanten van Utrecht*.

<sup>29</sup> Hartog, ‘Het collegie der scavanten te Utrecht’.

<sup>30</sup> See Vogelsangh, *Contra libellum* and Vander Waeyen, *Pro vera et genuina Reformatorem Sententia*. In this particular treatise Van Velthuysen was also accused of having been far too civil to Meyer. In the same year anonymous *Advisen*, an *Oordeel*, and an *Ernstige Waerschouwing* were issued against Wolzogen in Utrecht, Middelburg, and Amsterdam respectively.

<sup>31</sup> [Heidanus] *Advijs Van de Theologische Faculteyt tot Leyden*.

<sup>32</sup> On Koerbagh, see Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring*, 272–327; Vandenbossche, *Spinozisme en kritiek bij Koerbagh* and ‘Adriaan Koerbagh en Spinoza’.

<sup>33</sup> Waermont [= Koerbagh], *’t Samen-Spraeck Tusschen een Gereformeerden Hollander en Zeeuw*. See Jongeneelen, ‘An Unknown Pamphlet of Adriaan Koerbagh’.

Dutch language by attempting to purify it from foreign influences. In the tradition of Stevin, of the chamber *De Eglentier*, and more importantly, of Lodewijk Meyer and Abraham van Berkel, Koerbagh issued two dictionaries. The first one dealt with legal vocabulary, and does not seem to have caused great concern.<sup>34</sup> The second, however, the infamous *Bloemhof* (Flower Bed) of 1668 was not only far more general in scope—dealing for instance with biology, philosophy and theology—, but also decidedly more radical in spirit.

Once the *Bloemhof* came out, in February 1668, the Amsterdam church-council took action. For some time already, it had suspected the Koerbagh brothers to be heretics. Now it was certain of it. Adriaan sensed the danger, and left for Culemborg, just as his Leiden friend Abraham van Berkel had done earlier. Instead of waiting for the indignation over the *Bloemhof* to abate, he immediately started preparations for another publication. As early as May, a printer from neighbouring Utrecht was working on the production of *Een Ligt schijnende in duistere plaatsen* (A Light shining in dark places). Van Berkel, who had just published his translation of Hobbes' *Leviathan* actually assisted Koerbagh reading proofs, and did his best to persuade the Utrecht printer to finish what he had started. For this printer, one Everardus van Eede, who had already sent part of the printed *Een Ligt* to an Amsterdam publisher, had grown very worried indeed. Having read the first sheets of *Een Ligt*, he became suspicious. He informed the Utrecht *schout* (magistrate), who in turn alarmed his colleague from Amsterdam about the manuscript. Meanwhile, Adriaan had disappeared altogether. Johannes Koerbagh, however, was arrested in Amsterdam, and the hunt for Adriaan continued throughout the summer. On July 17th he was captured after the Amsterdam *schout* had been tipped off by an acquaintance of Adriaan, who knew that the author of *Een Ligt* now wore a black wig, and had gone into hiding somewhere in Leiden. Back in Amsterdam, Adriaan was interrogated about the views he held and the company he kept. He bravely refused to inculcate his friends. But whilst Johannes was released, Adriaan was severely punished: 10 years of imprisonment, another 10 years ban from Amsterdam, and a fine of 6000 guilders. In the *rasphuis*, Adriaan Koerbagh soon fell ill, and died in October 1669.

Reading *Bloemhof* and *Een Ligt*, it is not difficult to recognize why the reformed ministry of Amsterdam was so disturbed by Koerbagh's

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<sup>34</sup> A.K., *'t Nieuw Woorden-Boek der Regten*.



views, and why the authorities were prepared to take drastic action this time. To start with, *Bloemhof* contains a number of violently anti-Trinitarian passages, flatly denying the concept of *Triniteyt*, as nothing but ‘something made up by divines, not to be found in Scripture’.<sup>35</sup> In *Een Ligt* Koerbagh even went so far as to call Socinianism the only truly reformed religion.<sup>36</sup> In fact, Jan Knol, the translator of the Socinian confession was one of the Koerbagh brother’s closest friends. However, Unitarian doubts as to the divinity of Christ were complemented with typically libertine insults concerning Jesus’ *real* father:

Nobody knows the real father of this Keeper, and that is why ignorant people have called him a God—a God of eternity and eternally a Son of God, born by a virgin untouched by her husband; but these propositions are not in accordance with Scripture and against reason as well.<sup>37</sup>

From articles like *Metaphysica* and *Mirakel* in Koerbagh’s *Bloemhof* it becomes quite clear that here a rationalist is at work, who indeed felt, like Meyer, that since no supernatural revelation is possible, the Bible itself should be studied like any other old book.<sup>38</sup> Since all that exists is nature, and since there is nothing beyond nature, there is neither room for ‘miraculous’ events ‘against or above’ nature, nor for meta-physics as a meaningful discipline.<sup>39</sup> Precisely as Meyer had done in his *Interpres*, Koerbagh simply ridiculed such vital Christian doctrines as the *creatio ex nihilo*.<sup>40</sup>

This highly polemical naturalism, first expounded in the Republic by Meyer and Koerbagh in the 1660s, can largely be explained as the product of a radically secularised, non-academic Cartesianism, upheld by avowed supporters of De Witt, who at least were interested in the political philosophy of Hobbes. Both Meyer and Koerbagh, however, were inspired not only by Descartes and Hobbes, but most importantly, by a third author, who during the 1660s was only known to a small circle of friends, mainly from Amsterdam. This group is now generally referred to as the circle of Spinoza (1632–1677). Only they may have grasped the wider significance of Meyer’s closing remark in the *Interpres*, that Cartesian philosophy was on the brink of its final perfection, now that soon a publication was to be expected

<sup>35</sup> Koerbagh, *Bloemhof*, 632–633.

<sup>36</sup> Koerbagh, *Een Ligt*, 154–155 and 246. See also his *Bloemhof*, 327–328.

<sup>37</sup> Koerbagh, *Bloemhof*, 664.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–97.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 444 and 447.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 206–207.

on God, the rational soul, and man's highest well-being—an obvious reference to the *Short Treatise*, a text re-discovered in the nineteenth century, written by Spinoza in the early 1660s.<sup>41</sup>

Whereas Koerbagh's *Bloemhof* could arguably have been written without any specific insight into the mature philosophy of Spinoza,<sup>42</sup> *Een Ligt* contains many passages—on God, and his attributes—which can only be explained in a Spinozan context.<sup>43</sup> It should be stressed that *Een Ligt* never saw the light of day, until Hubert Vandenbossche in 1974 produced an edition, based on the two surviving manuscripts copies, now kept in the Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum in The Hague. There are no indications either that this text was ever circulated among Dutch Spinozists in the way Spinoza's own *Korte Verhandeling* did, which was handed down among admirers of Willem Deurhoff.<sup>44</sup> Hence it must be treated as a personal document of a truly exceptional individual. In the first chapter, 'On God', in which Koerbagh roughly paraphrases Spinoza's monism, he immediately lays his cards on the table, denying any divine creation,<sup>45</sup> and endorsing the message of Meyer's *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpretis*.<sup>46</sup> Then he dealt with such concepts as the Trinity, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit, and Good and Evil. Separate chapters on the Bible, Heresy, Heaven and Hell, Oracles, Angels, Satan, Ghosts, Magic, and Miracles follow, which combine a violent critique of any belief in the supernatural with a keen political awareness. Koerbagh went to great lengths to ridicule the Further Reformation. What could possibly be the harm in visiting the theatre, he asked, or in letting one's hair grow over one's ears?<sup>47</sup> Throughout the ages, theologians have only been interested in the satisfaction of their personal ambitions, and thus they have always fostered religious strife and political division, whereas in reality '*concordia res parvae crescunt, discordia decrescunt*'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup> [Meyer] *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpretis*, Epilogue.

<sup>42</sup> With the possible exception of Koerbagh's explanation of *Ipstantie* (*Bloemhof*, 381), which does remind one of Spinoza's concept of substance. Hobbes' influence—that is to say: Van Berkel's co-operation—does seem evident, in particular on such subjects as *Engelen* (compare *Bloemhof*, 268–269 to *Leviathan*, 412–418), *Satan*, and *Duyvelen* (compare *Bloemhof*, 258–259, 670 to *Leviathan*, 657–684).

<sup>43</sup> Koerbagh, *Een Ligt*, 3 ff.

<sup>44</sup> See the introduction to Spinoza, *Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en deszelus welstand*, ed. Mignini.

<sup>45</sup> Koerbagh, *Een Ligt*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 37 ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

Only reason, the true 'Word of God' that is, produces true religion.<sup>49</sup> Koerbagh too must have felt that mathematics had a special role to play in establishing the principles of this rational religion, arguing 'mathematically' against the coherence of the concept of the Trinity and against the possibility of miracles.<sup>50</sup>

All this could easily be taken to imply a thorough rejection on Koerbagh's side of any religion as such. In fact Koerbagh explicitly criticized 'MACHIAVEL and some others' for arguing that 'religions are nothing but stories made up to control the common people', for: 'according to us it is as clear as that the whole is larger than a part, that there is one true reasonable God and one true reasonable religion, which stands in no need of force for its defence.'<sup>51</sup> For Koerbagh, 'reason' in a very literal sense was 'the Word of God'. According to him, it made no sense to separate philosophy from theology, since they both aim to procure knowledge of God, that is Nature.<sup>52</sup> His insistence throughout *Een Ligt* to support his views with biblical references, seems to indicate that, in a curious way, he regarded himself a Christian. Christ's purpose, he argued, had been to raise mankind 'from ignorance to knowledge, wisdom and insight'.<sup>53</sup> Tellingly, Adriaan Koerbagh's prosecutors were fully aware of his friendship, not only with Jan Knol and Abraham van Berkel, but also with Spinoza.<sup>54</sup> The fact that they showed a singular interest in Koerbagh's relationship with this young Dutch Jew, may seem surprising. For in 1668 Spinoza was still a rather obscure lens-grinder, whose only publication was a Latin introduction to the philosophy of Descartes, issued in 1663 and translated in 1664. As we will see, however, even before the publication of his *début*, Spinoza was rumoured to be one of the key-members of an Amsterdam circle of free-thinkers, of which Meyer and Koerbagh were also prominent members.

As far as Spinoza's youth is concerned, it cannot be stressed enough that we know almost nothing.<sup>55</sup> He was born on November 24th 1632, in Amsterdam, in a Jewish-Portuguese family of some

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 237 ff and 365 ff.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 69 ff and 689-725.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>54</sup> Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring*, 310.

<sup>55</sup> We know so little about his life that at the moment a convincing biography cannot be written, as was proven by both Nadler, *Spinoza* and Gullan-Whur, *Within Reason*. On the whole Nadler's book is more accurate, although his insistence on Spinoza's Jewish background is quite spurious.

renown. After a traditional Talmud-Thora education, together with his brother, in 1654 he set up a firm importing Mediterranean fruits. In 1656, however, all links with the Jewish community were severed, when he was banned. Although several hypotheses have been tried, we simply do not know why the young Baruch was thrown out of the synagogue, and why henceforth he called himself Benedictus.<sup>56</sup> Due to a simple lack of documentary evidence, we are still in the dark as to the question whether Spinoza was banned on account of feelings he had developed under the influence of other heretic Jews, like the medical doctor Juan de Prado (1614–?), or as a result of non-Jewish writings, for instance those of Descartes or his Dutch following. Several contemporary sources indicate, that the young Spinoza composed an *Apology* as a reply to his removal from the Synagogue. Since this text has been lost, we may never be entirely sure.<sup>57</sup> Neither is it possible to say much with any certainty about Spinoza's life immediately after the ban. For the most reliable source concerning his life are his letters, and the first item of his correspondence that still exists, dates from August 1661.

We do know for certain that Spinoza attended classes at the Latin School in Amsterdam of the former Jesuit from Antwerpen, Franciscus van den Enden (1602–1674).<sup>58</sup> We also know that this Van den Enden was something of a political philosopher, probably influenced by the kind of republicanism defended by De la Court, and that by the early 1660s dangerous rumours were starting to spread. As early as August 1659, Spinoza, together with Juan de Prado, was associated with 'atheism' in a report drawn up by the Spanish Inquisition on the occasion of the conversion to Judaism by a Spanish Catholic, living in Amsterdam.<sup>59</sup> In May 1661 a young Danish philologist and physician, Olaus Borch (1626–1690), on his visit to Amsterdam noted in

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<sup>56</sup> Kasher and Biderman, 'Why was Spinoza Excommunicated?'; Wesselius, 'De ban van Spinoza'. For the relevant documents concerning Spinoza's business career, see Vaz Diaz and Van der Tak, 'Spinoza Merchant and Autodidact'.

<sup>57</sup> For the moment, however, the evidence compiled by the French historian Révah does suggest that Spinoza's clash with the *parnassim* may perhaps be explained in terms of the highly specific cultural predicament of the Amsterdam *sefardim*, descendants of Iberian *marrano*-culture. See Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado* and 'Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne'. For two highly speculative attempts to turn Spinoza into an essentially Jewish philosopher, see Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics* and Albiac, *La Synagogue vide*.

<sup>58</sup> See Meininger en Van Suchtelen, *Liever met werken, als met woorden* and Van den Enden, *Vrye Politijke Stellingen*, ed. Klever. See also the critical assessment of Klever's claims by Mertens, 'Franciscus van den Enden'.

<sup>59</sup> Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, 32 and 64.

his diary that he had been told that there were several ‘atheists’ in Amsterdam, mostly Cartesians, including a Jew—who can arguably be identified with the Jew from Rijnsburg, he hears about in September of that year.<sup>60</sup> From his correspondence, we know for a fact that by August 1661, Spinoza had moved to Rijnsburg, near Leiden. The Amsterdam circle, meanwhile, continued to raise suspicion. In April 1662, Borch recorded rumours to the effect that the Cartesian ‘atheists’ from Amsterdam—he mentions Van den Enden and Glazemaker, the famous translator—‘per Deum nihil aliud intelligere quam totum hoc universum.’<sup>61</sup> We also know that these ‘atheists’ mingled freely with several extremely liberal Mennonites and Collegiants, who by this time had also begun to be seriously interested in Cartesianism.

Shortly after the prohibition of Socinianism in 1653 by the States of Holland, Amsterdam Collegiants were accused of introducing Socinian and Arian heresies. Just like the ‘Cartesians’, one anonymous pamphleteer argued, they accept no authority but their own ‘reason’.<sup>62</sup> The sequel to this pamphlet also informed its readers about where these Collegiants and Cartesians used to convene, namely at the infamous bookshop—‘de Schoole der spotters’ (‘the school of mockers’)—of Jan Rieuwertsz, the publisher of Glazemaker’s Descartes-translations (and the future publisher of Spinoza).<sup>63</sup> A few years later, the growing tensions among Mennonite communities throughout the Republic would erupt in the so-called ‘Lammerenkrijg’ (War of the Lambs) of the 1660s, a battle that was fought mainly in Amsterdam, but also in such important towns as Utrecht, Leiden and Rotterdam.<sup>64</sup> In the dozens of pamphlets published on the future of the Mennonite congregations in the Republic, the acute fears of the more old-fashioned—‘Flemish’—Mennonites are amply illustrated. In *Oogh-Water* (Eye-Water), for instance, issued in 1664, a Flemish Mennonite from Amsterdam complains that his congregation is falling apart, now that more and more Mennonites are joining

<sup>60</sup> Klever, ‘Spinoza and Van den Enden in Borch’s Diary’, 314; Schepelern (ed.) *Olai Borrichii Itinerarium 1660–1665*, I, 214: ‘Esse hic in vicino Rensberg ex judaeo Christianum, sed jam paene Atheum, qui vet: Test: nil curat, Nov. et Alcoranum et fab. Aesopi pari aestimat pondere, illum hominem alioquin admodum sincere et inculpate vivere, et conficiendis perspicilis et microscopiis occupari.’

<sup>61</sup> Klever, ‘Spinoza and Van den Enden in Borch’s Diary’, 318; Schepelern (ed.) *Olai Borrichii Itinerarium*, II, 92.

<sup>62</sup> Reinardi, *De Ontdekte Veinsing*, Preface.

<sup>63</sup> *Het Tweede Deel, Van de ondekete Veinzingh*, 8. See Piet Visser, ‘“Blasphemous and Pernicious”’.

<sup>64</sup> Kühler, *Het socinianisme in Nederland*, 144–199; Van Slee, *De Rijnsburger collegianten*, 135 ff.

the liberal 'Waterlander' community, while others are turning into Remonstrants or 'Libertyns' and 'Naturalists', free-thinkers, steeped in 'Cartesiaensche Philosophie', who 'mock all religion including Scripture and Spirit, and who even doubt whether they themselves exist and almost question whether God exists, or at least question the existence of a God who cares about what happens to us.'<sup>65</sup>

Among the 'Cartesian' Mennonites from Amsterdam, active during the 1660s, several have made it to the canon of the History of Philosophy, since they play such a prominent role in Spinoza's correspondence. Simon de Vries (1633/34–1667), Pieter Balling (?–?) and Jarig Jelles (1619/20–1683) apparently played a prominent role in Spinoza's 'circle' and there can be no doubt as to the veneration in which he was held by these 'Waterlander' Mennonites. In fact, Pieter Balling's *Het Licht Op den Kandelaar* (The Light On the Candlestick), first published in 1662, contains the first expression of some of Spinoza's thoughts. They are, however, put in a rather confused and eclectic setting, which has given rise to widely differing interpretations.<sup>66</sup> What is clear, is that its insistence on the need to be precise in the choice of one's words, fits in well with the linguistic interest of Van Berkel, Meyer, and Koerbagh. Its concern about the disastrous consequences of Christian division, is equally typical of Dutch Cartesianism. Its understanding of 'the light' itself, however, is couched in such general terms that it simply does not allow for any specific interpretation—although its Cartesian overtones are evident.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand Balling and Jelles did play a crucial role in presenting the philosophy of Spinoza to the reading public. From Spinoza's early correspondence, we learn that once he had moved to Rijnsburg, and in 1663 to Voorburg, Balling, Jelles and De Vries continued to study his manuscripts, and to discuss his views. In fact, Spinoza's *début* was written at the request of his Amsterdam friends.<sup>68</sup> Meyer wrote a preface to this book, written by one 'Benedictus de Spinoza, Amstelodamensem', which was translated by Balling

<sup>65</sup> Van den Wijngaardt, *Oogh-Water*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> [Balling] *Het Licht Op den Kandelaar*. See Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans Église*, 206–217; Van den Berg, 'Quaker and Chiliasit'; Manusow, 'Spinoza en de erfenis van Jacob Boehme'; Klever, 'De spinozistische prediking van Pieter Balling'; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 185–214.

<sup>67</sup> On p. 4 of *Het Licht*, Balling defines this inner light as follows: 'een klare en onderscheidene kennise van waarheit, in het verstant van een ygelijck mensch, door welk hy zodanich overtuigt is, van het zijn, en hoedanich zijn der zaken, dat het voor hem onmogelijck is, daar aan te kunnen twijffelen.'

<sup>68</sup> Spinoza, *Renati Des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae Pars I, & II*.

in 1664. After Spinoza had moved to The Hague in 1669, and published his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* anonymously in 1670, the ‘circle’ seems to have remained intact. De Vries and Balling had both died by this time. But in 1677, after Spinoza’s death on 21 February, Jelles, together with Lodewijk Meyer, and several other Amsterdam friends, managed to edit Spinoza’s *Opera Posthuma*—and its translation, *De Nagelate Schriften*—in less than a year.<sup>69</sup> These posthumous works included Spinoza’s *magnum opus*, the *Ethica*. The first two books of the Dutch *Ethics* were probably translated by Balling, just before 1665.<sup>70</sup> Finally, Jelles wrote the famous preface to the *Opera Posthuma*.<sup>71</sup>

## 2. Spinoza’s Critics

Despite the obvious support Spinoza received from his many Dutch friends, the large majority of his seventeenth-century audience was shocked by his views. In order to understand this reaction it is first necessary to take into account the rather curious chronology in which Spinoza’s books were issued. In 1663, Spinoza launched his *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae*. Since Lodewijk Meyer, in the preface had issued a warning that the author did not share each and every principle of Descartes’ philosophy, and since Spinoza himself, in a notorious *appendix* to his début, entitled *Cogitata Metaphysica*, let it be known that his philosophy was indeed marked by a number of substantial modifications of Cartesianism, by 1663 Dutch Cartesians in particular were completely justified in regarding Spinoza as a somewhat questionable ally. Especially Spinoza’s rejection of Descartes’ analysis of the freedom of the will and Meyer’s announcement of his friend’s ambition to go beyond Descartes’ ‘rationalism’ must have sounded intriguing. For according to Meyer, Spinoza was of the opinion that

all those things, and even many others more sublime and subtle, can not only be conceived clearly and distinctly, but also explained very satisfactorily—provided that the human intellect is guided in the search for truth and knowledge of things along a different path from that which Descartes opened up and made smooth. The foundations of the sciences brought to light by Descartes, and the things he built on them, do not suffice to disentangle and solve all the very difficult problems

<sup>69</sup> Steenbakkens, *Spinoza’s Ethica from Manuscript to Print*, 5–70.

<sup>70</sup> Akkerman, *Studies in the Posthumous Works of Spinoza*, 77–203.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 205–275.

which occur in metaphysics. Different foundations are required, if we wish our intellect to rise to that pinnacle of knowledge.<sup>72</sup>

It is significant that shortly after the publication of the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, Spinoza received a letter from a total stranger, one Willem van Blyenbergh (1632–1696), a merchant from Dordrecht, inviting the young philosopher to lay his cards on the table, an invitation which he politely declined.<sup>73</sup>

In short, even before the publication in 1670 of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, at least some confusion, and very probably some uneasiness, was to be expected among the reading public concerning Spinoza's own philosophical intentions. As soon as the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* became available in 1670, Dutch theologians and philosophers of the time realised that Spinoza's particular variety of Cartesianism did indeed pose a huge threat to the core of the Reformed creed, as well as to the more or less general agreement that had been reached among leading Cartesian philosophers and theologians with regards to the relationship between philosophy and theology. As we have seen, this agreement was founded on a meticulously argued and comfortable *separation* of philosophy and theology, leaving each discipline its own domain and its own professional competence. The anxiety over the stability of this compromise was, however, far from hypothetical. For as we have also seen, in 1666 Lodewijk Meyer, the author of the preface to Spinoza's debut, had caused a huge row with the publication of the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres*—a proposal which undermined the very basis of this compromise.

Spinoza now argued that Scripture should be its own interpreter, and that philosophy and theology should indeed be separated since theology deals with revelation and obedience, while philosophy is concerned with nature and truth. Hence, since theologians lack the competence to judge matters philosophical, the *libertas philosophandi* can in no way be dependent on any theological judgement. Spinoza stated it to be his main purpose to defend the celebrated Dutch freedom of conscience in the face of growing intolerance on the part of the Calvinist clergy, or, to quote the *Tractatus*' subtitle, to show 'that freedom to philosophise can not only be granted without injury to

<sup>72</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, I, 229. Cf. 306–310 and 329–333; *Opera*, I, 132. Cf. 240–244 and 264–268.

<sup>73</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 354 ff; *Opera*, IV, 79 ff. On this correspondence, see: Deleuze, *Spinoza: philosophie pratique*, 44–62; Van Bunge, 'A Tragic Idealist', 270–271; Klever, 'Blijenberghs worsteling met het kwaad'.



Piety and the Peace of the Commonwealth, but that the Peace of the Commonwealth and Piety are endangered by the suppression of this freedom.’ The earliest reference to the *Tractatus* known, is Spinoza’s own announcement in 1665 to Henri Oldenburg (c.1620–1677), first secretary of the Royal Society, that he had started writing about his feelings regarding Scripture, and contains 3 reasons for doing so:

1. The prejudices of the theologians. For I know that these are the main obstacles which prevent men from giving their minds to philosophy. So I apply myself to exposing such prejudices and removing them from the minds of sensible people.
2. The opinion of me held by the common people, who constantly accuse me of atheism. I am driven to avert this accusation, too, as far as I can.
3. The freedom to philosophise and to say what we think. This I want to vindicate completely, for here it is in every way suppressed by the excessive authority and egotism of preachers.<sup>74</sup>

In order to accomplish the separation of philosophy from theology, it would be necessary, Spinoza argued, to gain a proper perspective on the true nature of religion. This implied the need to really understand the Bible. Consequently, Spinoza wrote an epochal chapter (VII) *On the Interpretation of Scripture*.

This brings us back to the very issue which had been the occasion of the first pamphlet war on Cartesianism in the Republic. Van Velthuysen himself soon reacted, for Spinoza came very close to repeating several of the views he had voiced himself in his *Proofs* and in the *Dissertatio* from 1668. In the first place, Spinoza had stressed that ‘all knowledge of Scripture must be sought from Scripture alone’, that in reading the Bible we should follow the ‘universal rule’ ‘to ascribe no teaching to Scripture that is not clearly established from studying it closely’,<sup>75</sup> and that in doing so we should admit ‘no other light than the natural light of reason.’<sup>76</sup> In the second place, Van Velthuysen came across a number of crucial passages—like the ones on the curious behaviour of the sun in *Joshua*—in which Spinoza urged his readers to look for the *verus sensus* of Scripture by examining the historical circumstances of their origins.<sup>77</sup> Finally, Spinoza appeared to make use of the very important difference between ‘mathematical’ and ‘moral’ certainty in his assessment of the prophecies, in a way that must have looked very familiar indeed to anyone who

<sup>74</sup> Spinoza, *Letters*, 185–186; *Opera*, IV, 166.

<sup>75</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 142; *Opera*, III, 99.

<sup>76</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 154; *Opera*, III, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 79, 127, 135; *Opera*, III, 35–36, 84, 92.

had previously followed Van Velthuysen's quarrel with the Calvinist orthodoxy.<sup>78</sup>

Spinoza's first readers, however, were of the opinion that the way in which he dealt with matters *theological* revealed that he was, in fact, turning philosophy into the interpreter of Scripture—just as Meyer had done four years earlier. This feeling was admirably expressed by Van Velthuysen, who in a letter from 1671 wondered whether Spinoza was one of those according to whom 'Philosophiam esse Scripturae interpretem'.<sup>79</sup> Van Velthuysen wrote this letter on January 24th 1671, and addressed it to his old acquaintance from Rotterdam, the Mennonite surgeon Jacob Ostens, who in turn saw to it that his friend Spinoza got hold of it. Apparently Ostens, who must have known Van Velthuysen quite well, had asked the latter how he felt about Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. On this occasion Van Velthuysen once more must have felt trapped by his own Cartesian exegetics. For Spinoza, who at his death appeared to own a copy of Van Velthuysen's *Dissertatio* against Meyer,<sup>80</sup> defended a hermeneutical position which came very close to the one upheld by his Utrecht correspondent. Yet whereas the latter, being a sound enough Cartesian, had been perfectly safe in regard to the Christian tradition in that he had constant access to Descartes' proofs for the existence of a transcendent God and for the existence of an immortal human soul, substantially distinct from the body, after the publication of the *Tractatus* Spinoza would soon be generally considered not only a fatalist, but an atheist as well.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, Van Velthuysen took the challenge of Spinozism extremely seriously: after having published a *Tractatus Moralis de Naturali Pudore* (1676), his *Opera Omnia* from 1680 contained two new treatises, a *Tractatus de Cultu Naturali, et Origine Moralitatis* and a *Tractatus de Articulis Fidei fundamentalibus*, both of which were severely critical of Spinoza. Van Velthuysen attacked Spinoza particularly forcefully in the former which was specifically intended *Oppositus Tractatus Theologico-Politico et Operi Posthumo B.D.S.* Apart from criticism on for instance Spinoza's philosophy of substance—to which we shall return later in this chapter—it contains lengthy refutations of Spinoza's intellectualist notion of virtue, his denial of the freedom of the will, his materialistic and deterministic notion of God, his re-

<sup>78</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 233. Cf. 74–75; *Opera*, III, 185. Cf. 30–31.

<sup>79</sup> Spinoza, *Opera*, IV, 210.

<sup>80</sup> Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, 164.

<sup>81</sup> Van Bunge, 'On the Early Dutch Reception of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'.

duction of the human mind to a modus of the attribute 'Cogitatio', and related aspects of Spinoza's moral philosophy.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, Van Velthuysen's criticism of the *Tractatus* was not merely inspired by the fear of being identified with its message. On the contrary, his principal theological objection to the *Tractatus* concerned Spinoza's determinism, based on the identification of God's will and His intellect.<sup>83</sup> It is this identification which, according to him, turned Spinozism into fatalism, and which served as the—entirely wanton for unproven—foundation for Spinoza's denial of the biblical miracles and of his sly abuse of the Cartesian notion of accommodation. We have seen that Van Velthuysen initially had tried to dissociate himself from Wittichius' employment of the notion that God in the Scriptures accommodated His Word to His audience, like a father does in front of his children. We have seen as well that he soon admitted of his agreement with his fellow-Cartesian, arguably also for purely party-political reasons. He could, however, not possibly accept the way in which Spinoza had made use of this theory, since he was convinced that the *Tractatus* was based on a fatalistic metaphysics that turned God's *accommodatio ad captum vulgi* into blatant lies. If a universal and unconditional determinism does in fact present the final truth about the world at large and about human existence, *any* attempt at formulating a morality simply falls short of the inevitable *fact* that morality without freedom is a vacuous concept. Thus, Van Velthuysen argued, Spinoza turned God into a deceiver. What is more, Spinoza had to be a fraud, by posing as if he himself believed the moral lesson provided by the Scriptures, that obedience to God's commandment to love one's neighbour, that is to practice piety and charity, will indeed lead to salvation, even

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<sup>82</sup> Although Spinoza's reply to Van Velthuysen's first letter reveals outright anger on the part of the author over Van Velthuysen's criticism, there is every reason to suspect that this animosity was only short-lived. A second letter in Spinoza's *Opera* addressed to Van Velthuysen and written in the fall of 1675, shows that the two had started a regular correspondence. Sadly we know next to nothing about the development of their acquaintance. Spinoza does, however, in this second letter remark that he knows of no one whose criticism he respects more than Van Velthuysen. There is even talk of the publication of a manuscript of the latter, to which Spinoza would add his replies. It is tempting to read this as a reference to what we know call 'letter 42', but we simply do not know what else had passed between the two. The one thing we do know is that Van Velthuysen in the preface to his own *Opera* would reveal that they had started to meet each other on a regular basis to discuss their views. For a general survey of Van Velthuysen's relations with Spinoza, see Klever, *Verba et Sententiae Spinozae*.

<sup>83</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 106, 125; *Opera*, III, 62, 82.

though we can only be ‘morally certain’ of this theology *ad usum vitae*.

Both Van Velthuysen and Spinoza tried to separate philosophy from theology. We have already established how hard it was for the former to define the proper subject of theology. Since Van Velthuysen had declared philosophy to be an eminently reasonable enterprise, which should constitute the very core of Law, Medicine, and Theology, and since Spinoza had affirmed that ‘theology defines its religious dogmas only so far as suffices to secure obedience, and it leaves reason to decide exactly how these dogmas are to be understood in respect of truth’,<sup>84</sup> Van Velthuysen must, again, have felt trapped by his own Cartesianism. Looking back, we may perhaps conclude that whereas Van Velthuysen attempted *to rationalize theology* (to the extent that it became very hard to distinguish as a proper discipline in its own right), Spinoza tried *to naturalize religion* (to the extent that he himself had to admit that theology could only be based on something called ‘moral certainty’). This difference in outlook is apparent as well in their correspondence, in which Van Velthuysen strongly emphasized Spinoza’s claim that he sticks to the *literal* meaning of the Sacred Texts as much as he can, rather than to our figurative reading of Scripture. Spinoza had done so in his evaluation of the sayings of Moses—‘God is fire’ and ‘God is jealous’.<sup>85</sup> Van Velthuysen had made use of similar instances in order to defend his policy of looking for the *scopus*, or the *intention* of the Holy Ghost. Spinoza, however, did not seem to care much for the intentions of the third person of the Trinity and instead urged his readers to collect further data on the beliefs of Moses himself. This is, in effect, precisely what his naturalization of religion boils down to: studying the human authors of the Word of God.

In 1671, the same year in which Van Velthuysen quarreled with Spinoza, the Calvinist theologian Johannes Melchior (1646–1689) published a short *Epistola* against Spinoza.<sup>86</sup> Both the Remonstrants and the Cartesians were well under way in preparing their own—fiercely critical—commentaries on the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. Curiously, both the Remonstrant minister Jacobus Batelier (1593–1672) from The Hague and the Cartesian Professor Regnerus van Mansvelt from Utrecht died before they could see their efforts

<sup>84</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 232; *Opera*, III, 184.

<sup>85</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 143–144; *Opera*, III, 100–101.

<sup>86</sup> J.M.V.D.M. [= Melchior] *Epistola Ad Amicum*. See De Vet, ‘On Account of the Sacrosanctity of the Scriptures’ and ‘Letter of a Watchman on Zion’s Walls’.

through the press. Yet both Batelier's and Van Mansvelt's books were published: Batelier's *Vindiciae Miraculorum* in 1673, Van Mansvelt's *Adversus* in 1674. That very same year, moreover, Spinoza's old acquaintance Willem van Blyenbergh issued his refutation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, after which the Collegiant Johannes Bredenburg (1643–1691) and the Socinian Frans Kuyper—the editor of the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*—completed the extremely hostile Dutch reception of Spinoza's first original publication by adding two more refutations of what was held to be Spinoza's 'atheism'.<sup>87</sup>

Spinoza's atheism was deduced mainly from his comments in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* on the identity of God's will and intellect, and from his identification of the power of God and the power of Nature. Van Velthuysen had already suggested that according to Spinoza 'Universum ipsum Deum esse'.<sup>88</sup> Melchior wondered anxiously whether Spinoza was really of the opinion that apart from God, nothing else existed. Next, Batelier put the—rhetorical—question whether this 'new Philosopher' had indeed substituted God for Nature, after which Van Mansvelt boldly declared that the entire contents of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* were the logical outcome 'ex absurdissimo illo quod fovet Mysterio, de Deo corporeo ab universo non distincto'.<sup>89</sup> By the time Bredenburg had added a special section to his *Enervatio* in which he sought to show '*Naturam non Esse Deum*', it must have been generally agreed that Spinoza was in fact an atheist. An atheist, that is, who had covered up his feelings, which consequently had to be revealed as swiftly as possible. The very title of Kuyper's contribution to the debate put it in a nutshell: *Arcana Atheismi Revelata*.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> None of these polemicists seem to have been in any doubt as to the identity of the—anonymous—author of the *Tractatus*. Melchior, for instance, called him 'Zinospa' and 'Xinospa', whereas Batelier, Van Blyenbergh and Bredenburg in one way or another all referred to Spinoza's *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* from 1663. See also Batelier, *Vindiciae Miraculorum*, 4; Van Blyenbergh, *De Waerheyd*, 121, 172–173, 183, 379; Bredenburg, *Enervatio Tractatus Theologico-Politici*, 73. Van Mansvelt's statement—*Adversus*, 4—that he did not know the identity of the author of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, and did not want to know, cannot be taken seriously. For a telling collection of (semi) official denouncements of Spinozism, see Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*, 121 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Spinoza, *Opera*, IV, 208.

<sup>89</sup> Van Mansvelt, *Adversus*, 274. See also 4, 47, 53, 129, 134–135, 156, 168, 170, 273; Melchior, *Epistola Ad Amicum*, 33; Batelier, *Vindiciae Miraculorum*, 51, 98–99; Van Blyenbergh, *De Waerheyd*, 96–97, 115, 158, 172, 269.

<sup>90</sup> For Kuyper's analysis of Spinoza's atheism, see *Arcana Atheismi*, esp. 32–45. See also Scribano, *Da Descartes a Spinoza*, 191–205. On Kuyper, see also Vercruijsse, 'Frans Kuyper' and Petry, 'Kuyper's Analysis of Spinoza's Axiomatic Method'.

Once it had been established that Spinoza was indeed an atheist, no other conclusion could be drawn than that, what he had written about the necessity of distinguishing between the moral intention of Scripture and the truths enumerated by philosophy, the moral certainty which could be provided by theology and the mathematical certainty of philosophy, was simply an untruth. A sly ruse, that is, designed to cover up a hidden agenda which, however, was plainly discernible from the weird conclusions Spinoza had drawn from his study of the Old Testament. For what meaning could possibly be attached to theology, to the Scriptures, to Christ Himself, if God is Nature, especially if this nature is ruled by endless chains of cause and effect? Why pretend to take revelation seriously, when you clearly deny the reality of the supernatural to begin with?<sup>91</sup> Since Spinoza was held to be an atheist, as well as a fatalist, the way in which he had made use of the ancient notion of divine accommodation was widely held to be a treacherous ploy. According to his critics, Spinoza's claim that he let Scripture interpret itself was merely meant to hide his basic agreement with Lodewijk Meyer's outrageous proposal, put forward in the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres*.<sup>92</sup> In short, Spinoza was held to be an *impostor*.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the remarkable agreement among Spinoza's Calvinist, Remonstrant, Cartesian, Collegiant and Socinian opponents, each of them had his own axe to grind. Melchior was especially upset by Spinoza's treatment of the prophets, Batelier concentrated on Spinoza's chapter on miracles, and Van Mansvelt and Van Blyenbergh attempted to show that Spinozism should in no way be seen to follow from Cartesianism, and wrote comprehensive commentaries dealing with virtually every detail of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>94</sup> Bredenburg in turn tried to reverse this trend of highly detailed commentaries by focusing on what he felt was the philosophical foundation of Spinozism, the equation 'God = Nature'. Meanwhile, it was repeatedly suggested that Spinoza had purposely written an absurd analysis of the relationship between God and Nature, Scripture and history, theology and philosophy, in order to destroy any Christian understanding of revealed religion. Batelier suggested that Spino-

<sup>91</sup> Van Blyenbergh, *De Waerheyt*, 88–139, 383–392, 425–455.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 387–388; Van Mansvelt, *Adversus*, 3, 166–179, 257; Cuperus, *Arcana Atheismi*, 274.

<sup>93</sup> See also Kortholt, *De tribus impostoribus magnis liber*; Kettner, *De duobus impostoribus B. Bekker et B. de Spinoza* and Lagrée, 'Christian Kortholt (1633–1694) et son *De tribus impostoribus magnis*'.

<sup>94</sup> Van Blyenbergh, *De Waerheyt*, 112, 121; Van Mansvelt, *Adversus*, 32–33.

za's comments on miracles were nothing but a pretext for attacking Christianity in general, while his treatment of the prophets showed that he was either simply stupid, or acting in bad faith.<sup>95</sup> Bredenburg stressed that the 'preposterous' arguments contained in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* served no other purpose than to dumbfound his audience. They were designed to wreak havoc. According to him, this book had to be read as a deliberate attempt to confuse his Christian readers to the extent that they would simply be numbed by its absurdities, and lured into the abyss of atheism.<sup>96</sup>

Whatever one may think about the quality of the writings of men like Batelier, Van Mansvelt, and Bredenburg, they do deserve credit for at least one shared observation, namely that the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* was indeed to a large extent based on a 'hidden' philosophy. The philosophy, that is, of the *Ethica*, which was only published in 1677, shortly after Spinoza's death in February of that year. Spinoza completed the *Ethics* in 1675, but decided against publishing after the disastrous reception of the *Tractatus*. As a matter of fact, by this time his reputation was so poor that he was most probably right in being so careful.<sup>97</sup>

The *Ethics* consists of five parts, which deal with God, the mind, the affects, human bondage, and human freedom. It begins with a famous proof for the existence of God, and ends with an analysis of man's highest good, which consists of the knowledge of God, the celebrated *amor Dei intellectualis*. Just like his introduction to Cartesianism, the *Ethics* was written *ordine geometrico*.<sup>98</sup> Copying the structure of Euclid's *Elements*, the separate books of the *Ethics* are long chains of propositions, each of which is demonstrated on the basis of previously demonstrated propositions, 'definitions', and 'axioms'. The very shape of the book placed it firmly within the Cartesian tradition. Lodewijk Meyer in particular had already revealed a boundless enthusiasm for the possibilities of a mathematical philosophy: in the

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<sup>95</sup> Van Blyenbergh, *De Waerheit*, 61–62; Batelier, *Vindiciae Miraculorum*, 7, 54, 65–73. Batelier made a similar remark on Spinoza's claim that the essence of God could not be distinguished from the power of Nature. In a letter to the famous Remonstrant Professor Philippus van Limborch, who had assisted him composing the *Vindiciae Miraculorum*, Batelier said that he was not able to make up his mind as to whether this was 'an stultum an insanum'. See Van Bunge 'On the Early Dutch Reception of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*', 236. By 1671 Van Limborch too was convinced of Spinoza's atheism. Cf. Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring*, appendix VII.

<sup>96</sup> Bredenburg, *Enervatio Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, 52–55.

<sup>97</sup> Israel, 'The Banning of Spinoza's Works in the Dutch Republic'.

<sup>98</sup> Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's Ethica from Manuscript to Print*, 139–180.

preface to Spinoza's début he presented mathematics as the crucial instrument for ending all philosophical strife, which was, of course, not unlike what he had done in his own *Interpres*. To radical Cartesians like Meyer, Spinoza's *Ethics* must at least have seemed the ultimate fulfillment of an ambition Descartes himself had only very partially realized. Once the contents of this book were being studied, however, indignation was rife.

The majority of its first readers must have felt that the critics of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* had been right, since in the *Ethics*, Spinoza actually sets out to *prove* that there is in fact only one substance, *Deus sive Natura*. At this stage, a definite pattern emerges in the Dutch reception of Spinoza's works. For once again the first traces of anxiety concerning Spinoza's views are to be found in his correspondence, and once again the ambiguity of Spinoza's *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* appears to have played a key-role. Once again, a substantial number of refutations were published, in which it was argued that Spinozism represented an intrinsically absurd philosophy. One of the most fundamental issues that gave rise to fiercely critical comments, concerned the way in which Spinoza had dealt with the particular relationship between the concepts of *substance* and its *attributes*.<sup>99</sup>

According to Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* (I, 53), each and every substance has only one attribute, which is essential to the nature of this substance: the constitutive attribute of Soul is Thought, whereas the constitutive attribute of Body is Extension. Within a Cartesian context, every single substance has only one 'really distinctive' attribute. Closely following Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*, Spinoza, in the appendix to his introduction to Cartesianism, had recognized three different distinctions: *real* distinctions ('by which two substances are distinguished from one another'), *modal* distinctions ('between a mode of the substance and the substance itself, and that between two modes of one and the same substance') and a distinction *of reason* ('which exists between substance and its attribute').<sup>100</sup> Because God, according to Spinoza, is 'a most simple being', 'all the distinctions we make between the attributes of God are merely distinctions of reason—the attributes are not really distinguished from one another.'<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> A more detailed assessment can be found in Van Bunge, 'Spinoza en zijn critici'. A slightly different approach is supplied by Hubert, *Les premières réfutations de Spinoza*.

<sup>100</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 323; *Opera*, I, 257.

<sup>101</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 324; *Opera*, I, 259.



However, when Spinoza's Amsterdam friends, in the early sixties of the seventeenth century, around the time of the publication of the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, were studying a manuscript from Spinoza which contained an early version of the *Ethics*, they were struck by the notion 'that the nature of substance is so constituted that it can have more than one attribute.'<sup>102</sup> Simon de Vries wrote to Spinoza requesting to be enlightened on this matter, which he felt had not been sufficiently demonstrated in the manuscript he and his friends had been studying. Evidently referring to the obvious source of Spinoza's—perfectly Cartesian—remarks on the matter in the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, De Vries wondered why he could no longer accept the Cartesian argument that 'if I should say that each substance has only one attribute, I could rightly conclude that, where there are two different attributes, there are two different substances.'<sup>103</sup> De Vries and his friends, who were the very first readers of what would ultimately become the *Ethics*, were particularly confused by Spinoza's claim that although two attributes are understood as really distinct—which in a Cartesian context would have to mean that they belong to two really distinct substances—they would not necessarily have to constitute two different beings. Apparently, by the early sixties, Spinoza was defining substance as the totality of *all* really distinct attributes. This is of course why, according to Spinoza, there is only *one* substance, *Deus sive Natura*, which, however, in a Cartesian context makes no sense.

As soon as the *Ethics* was published in 1677, Spinoza's first critics were quick to react to the very same problem as that which had worried De Vries. Nearly all the major refutations of the *Ethics* which were published in the Netherlands during the final decades of the seventeenth century returned to De Vries' question. The way in which Spinoza, at the beginning of the first book of the *Ethics*, had defined both the concepts of substance and attributes, led these critics to a single conclusion: instead of integrating Descartes' two substances of Thought and Extension into a single substance *Deus sive Natura*, which consisted of an infinite number of attributes like Thought and Extension, Spinoza had in fact managed to destroy the very concept of substantiality.<sup>104</sup> For the way in which he conceived of the attributes could lead to no other conclusion than that each and every attribute should be regarded as a substance itself. To put it differently: having

<sup>102</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 192; *Opera*, IV, 41.

<sup>103</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 193; *Opera*, IV, 41.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Verbeek, *De vrijheid van de filosofie*, 19.

defined 'substance' and 'attribute' in the way that he had, Spinoza had actually demonstrated the existence of an infinity of substances, which meant in turn, that it was completely absurd to suggest, as he had done, that the first book of the *Ethics* supplied anything like a proof of the existence of *God*.

The three definitions from the first book of the *Ethics* that puzzled its first readers so much were the following: 'By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed'; 'By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence'; 'By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.'<sup>105</sup> Particularly if one considers the tenth proposition of the first book of the *Ethics*, according to which 'Each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself',<sup>106</sup> it is indeed very difficult to *distinguish* the ontological status of an attribute from that of a substance. This is apparent in the scholium to this proposition: 'it is of the nature of a substance that each of its attributes is conceived through itself, since all the attributes it has have always been in it together, and one could not be produced by another ...'<sup>107</sup> In short: if each and every attribute is indeed, just like substance itself, *causa sui*, how can it be that a single substance consists of an infinity of attributes?

Lambert van Velthuysen, in his *Tractatus de Cultu Naturali*, went right to the heart of the matter. He argued that in view of Spinoza's own definition of the attributes, he should of course have demonstrated the existence not of a single substance, but of an infinity of substances.<sup>108</sup> The indefatigable Van Blyenbergh, commenting on the scholium of the tenth proposition, in his refutation of the *Ethics* wondered whether Spinoza was really of the opinion that an attribute is in fact a substance.<sup>109</sup> In 1687, Willem Deurhoff (1643–1717), who was and still is regarded as a Spinozist of sorts, also aired his suspicions concerning the constitution of substance in the *Ethics*.<sup>110</sup> Professor Wittichius, by now a veteran of academic Cartesianism, in

<sup>105</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 408–409; *Opera*, II, 45.

<sup>106</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 416; *Opera*, II, 51.

<sup>107</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 416; *Opera*, II, 52.

<sup>108</sup> Van Velthuysen, *Tractatus de Cultu Naturali*, in: *Opera* II, 1372. Cf. 1394.

<sup>109</sup> Van Blyenbergh, *Wederlegging van de Ethica*, 30–31.

<sup>110</sup> Deurhoff, *Voorleeringen van de Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, 56–57 and 82–83. See Fix, 'Willem Deurhoff' and Krop, 'Radical Cartesianism in Holland'.

his widely acclaimed *Anti-Spinoza*, published in 1690, totally agreed: if indeed each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself, Wittichius argued, then each attribute of a substance must be a substance. Hence a substance must be substances. From this Wittichius concluded that instead of having proved the existence of a single God, Spinoza had actually demonstrated the existence of an infinity of gods.<sup>111</sup> Even Pierre Bayle, whose analysis of Spinozism has, I believe, often been underestimated, based his criticism of Spinoza's metaphysics on his curious treatment of the attributes:

Now, according to Spinoza extension in general is the attribute of one substance. He admits along with all other philosophers, that the attribute of a substance does not differ actually from that substance. Therefore he must acknowledge that extension in general is a substance. From which it necessarily follows that each part of extension is a particular substance, which destroys the foundations of the entire system of this author.<sup>112</sup>

From a purely philosophical perspective, these authors do deserve credit for pointing out at least two problems in the interpretation of Spinozism that are still discussed by leading Spinoza-scholars around the world. First, modern experts are still debating whether Spinoza's exegetics are in line with his hermeneutics. That is to say, whether in interpreting the Bible he was loyal to the principles of reading Scripture which he himself put forward. What is more, the recognition that Spinoza was not loyal in this respect has given rise to a very specific line of interpretation, which holds that Spinoza did indeed use 'double language', hiding his true feelings behind a deliberately distorted exegetics, which was designed to confuse his audience and lead the initiated towards an esoteric doctrine hidden below the surface of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>113</sup> Secondly, the question

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted from the Dutch translation: Wittichius, *Onderzoek van de Zede-konst van Benedictus de Spinoza*, 65–66. For lavish praise of Wittichius's efforts, see for instance *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique de l'année MDCXCII-2* (Amsterdam, 1691), 322–359 and *De Boekzaal van Europe. Julius en Augustus 1696*. (Rotterdam, 1696), 305–321. Cf. De Vet, 'La "Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique"' and 'Spinoza's afwezige aanwezigheid'.

<sup>112</sup> Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, art. Spinoza, rem. N. The translation is taken from Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, ed. Popkin, 302–303. See also Bayle, *Écrits sur Spinoza*, 61. Two more sympathetic accounts of Bayle's reaction to Spinoza are: Kolakowski, 'Pierre Bayle, critique de la métaphysique de la substance' and Brykman, 'La "Réfutation" de Spinoza dans le *Dictionnaire* de Bayle'. Recently, Bayle's attitude towards Spinoza has been re-assessed fundamentally by Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>113</sup> The coherence of the *Tractatus* has been brilliantly questioned by Zac, *Spinoza*

of how, within a Spinozan context, it can be that a single substance is constituted by an infinity of attributes, which are all *causa sui*, also continues to haunt the most acute commentators on the *Ethics* to this day. For a long time, Spinoza scholars attempted to circumvent this issue by means of an 'idealist' reading of the attributes, which has tried to conceive of the attributes as ways in which man *perceives* the single substance. Since Martial Gueroult's epochal analysis of book One of the *Ethics*, however, this attempt no longer seems warranted, but so far none of the 'realist' attempts to interpret the relationship between substance and its attributes has gained wide support either.<sup>114</sup>

In my view, the most interesting question raised by both issues in the seventeenth-century reception of Spinozism and in current Spinoza research concerns the validity of the usual interpretation of Spinoza as a radical Cartesian. This much seems clear, that Spinoza thought it appropriate to use the vocabulary of Cartesianism to formulate his own views. Yet his evident failure to raise support for these views, especially among Dutch Cartesians, seems to suggest that he was simply mistaken in his assessment of the willingness of Dutch Cartesians to further explore the philosophical possibilities implied by the Cartesian breakthrough in the Dutch Republic. What is more, by highlighting at least two crucial disparities between Cartesianism and Spinozism, the early Dutch reaction to Spinoza's writings suggests that the usual interpretation of Spinoza as a radical Cartesian falls short of the real discrepancy between these two major philosophical systems of the early modern age. Perhaps Spinoza's philosophy

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*et l'interprétation de l'Écriture*. Matheron has attempted to reconstruct the ultimate consistency of Spinoza's christology and his views on the salvation of the faithful: *Le Christ et le salut des ignorants chez Spinoza*. Despite the unmatched subtlety of Matheron's analysis, his reliance on a number of questionable sources in particular should hold out a warning. For the view that Spinoza deliberately wrote a 'hieroglyphical' treatise, see: Strauss, 'How to Study Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*?' and Tosel, *Spinoza ou le crépuscule de la servitude*. Mason has recently argued for the coherence of distinguishing two alternative 'theologies' in Spinoza: *The God of Spinoza*.

<sup>114</sup> The standard 'idealist' reading of the attributes is supplied by Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, I, 142 ff. A lethal blow to this interpretation was delivered by Gueroult, *Spinoza I*, 428–461. Gueroult's own alternative was lucidly criticised in Donagan, 'Essence and the Distinction of Attributes in Spinoza's Metaphysics'. Donagan's 'realist' interpretation can be found in 'Substance, Essence and Attribute in Spinoza'. See also: Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 64 ff; Curley, 'On Bennett's Interpretation of Spinoza's Monism'; Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza*, 120 ff and 'Spinoza est-il moniste?'; Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 157–173.

should indeed no longer be understood mainly as a product of the Cartesian revolution, but rather as a decisive break with the philosophy of Descartes. Once we are prepared to try to think of Spinoza not as the philosopher who somehow 'completed' Cartesianism, but rather as the one who destroyed some of its basic tenets, a further inquiry into the relation of Spinozism with its seventeenth-century surroundings seems appropriate.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE FATE OF DUTCH SPINOZISM

#### 1. *The Politics of Dutch Spinozism*

Fundamental as the differences between Descartes and Spinoza may be, it is virtually impossible to conceive of Spinoza's philosophy without acknowledgement of its Cartesian roots. And rare as Spinozism may have become in the Dutch Republic during the dying decades of the seventeenth century, it shares many of the characteristics of the history of philosophy such as it developed in the Netherlands from the late sixteenth century onwards. Most importantly perhaps, his work testifies to the high expectations of mathematics among Dutch scholars, that we traced back at least as far as Stevin, and the equally profound fear of religious discord, and its political ramifications. Had it not been for the obvious facts that mathematics served as a paradigm for many 'new' philosophers, including Descartes and Hobbes, and that the Dutch Republic was not the only seventeenth-century nation to wrestle with theologico-political instability, one could happily jump to the conclusion that here was a Dutch philosopher *par excellence*, since at the heart of his work lies the attempt to overcome the latter by means of the former.

On the other hand, Spinoza's writings seem to reflect what could be called a shared commitment to some of the major concerns of the intellectual history of the Dutch Republic since its very beginnings. The *Ethics* provides a compelling illustration of this, not merely in that it combines a highly abstract theory with an ultimately practical purpose, but also since it is obviously concerned with moral instruction and with the political themes of unity and freedom. It contains an exercise in moral philosophy, in which on the basis of an elaborate metaphysics and an equally sophisticated epistemology, a theory is put forward on man's *summum bonum*. As man's highest good is identified with freedom, and the greatest danger he faces is 'enslavement' to the passions, the *Ethics* basically delivers a moral psychology in which the development of a highly particular kind of knowledge is presented as the way to the liberation of man. This liberation, however, is very much the product of a collective effort.

The third and fourth parts of the *Ethics* are particularly clear in this respect. In the preface to the third part, entitled ‘Of the Affects’, Spinoza first reiterates his *mathematical* pretensions with regards to his psychology:

I shall treat the nature and powers of the affects, and the power of the mind over them, by the same method by which, in the preceding parts, I treated God and the mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies.<sup>1</sup>

In the fourth part Spinoza actually claims to ‘have also shown what the foundations of the state are’.<sup>2</sup> He did so in the *scholium* to proposition 37: ‘The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater’.<sup>3</sup> This proposition is demonstrated by two proofs, which is rare enough in the *Ethics*, that run as follows:

Dem.: Insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they are most useful to man; hence, according to the guidance of reason, we necessarily strive to bring it about that men live according to the guidance of reason. Now, the good which everyone who lives according to the dictates of reason wants for himself is understanding. Therefore, the good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men.

Next, desire, insofar as it is related to the mind, is the very essence of the mind. Now the essence of the mind consists in knowledge, which involves knowledge of God. Without this [knowledge the mind] can neither be nor be conceived. Hence, as the mind’s essence involves a greater knowledge of God, so will the desire also be greater by which one who seeks virtue desires for another the good he wants for himself, q.e.d.

Alternative Dem.: The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it. So, he will strive to have the others love the same thing. And because this good is common to all, and all can enjoy it, he will therefore (by the same reason) strive that all may enjoy it. And this striving will be the greater, the more he enjoys this good, q.e.d.<sup>4</sup>

*Ethics*, IV, 37 and its demonstrations are largely dependent on proposition 35: ‘Only in so far as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature’, and its *corrolaria* ‘There is no singular thing in Nature which is more useful to man than a

<sup>1</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 492; *Opera*, II, 138.

<sup>2</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 566; *Opera*, II, 236.

<sup>3</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 564–565; *Opera*, II, 235.

<sup>4</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 565; *Opera*, II, 235–236. I have omitted Spinoza’s references.

man who lives according to the guidance of reason' and 'When each man most seeks his own advantage for himself, then men are most useful to one another'.<sup>5</sup> These passages are particularly important, since they connect Spinoza's political philosophy to his psychology, and as a consequence, lead to the heart of his metaphysics.<sup>6</sup> The final proposition of the fourth part of the *Ethics* concludes that 'A man who is guided by reason is more free in a state, where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself.'<sup>7</sup> In the appendix to this part this is, again, followed up by the observation that man is best advised to form 'a common society'. Accordingly, Spinoza argued that concord is 'especially necessary' related to 'the things which concern religion and morality'.<sup>8</sup> This concord, or so Spinoza claimed, will not fail to emerge, once a 'wise' community will be established. Thus, Spinoza provided an eschatological underpinning of De la Court's analysis of how the citizens of a popular republic serve the common good by pursuing their personal interests. Spinoza, like De la Court, also emphasized the need for rulers to identify their interests with those of their subjects. By the same token, this wise community will be a democracy, the most reasonable and most natural society that exists.<sup>9</sup>

At this point a short remark on method seems in place. Much of recent continental Spinoza-scholarship has been inspired by the desire to establish the ultimate coherence of the Dutch philosopher's output. Martial Gueroult and Alexandre Matheron in particular by their very detailed reconstruction of the internal logic of the *Ethics*, have effectively shown that it is more or less possible to conceive of Spinozism as an essentially coherent account of the metaphysical structure of the world and man's place in it. Thus, Matheron has demonstrated how, in the *Ethics* the passage 'from substance to individuality' is completed by the passage 'from individuality to community', integrating in this fashion metaphysics, psychology and politics into a single, philosophical framework.<sup>10</sup> This reconstruction,

<sup>5</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 563; *Opera*, II, 232–233.

<sup>6</sup> See Balibar, *Spinoza et la politique*, 91–118; Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*, esp. 54–57 and 87–95. In this context it should be noticed that Gatens and Lloyd emphasize the *Stoic* background of Spinoza's moral psychology. See also James, 'Spinoza the Stoic' and Matheron, 'Le moment stoïcien de l'Éthique de Spinoza'.

<sup>7</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 587; *Opera*, II, 264.

<sup>8</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 590; *Opera*, II, 270.

<sup>9</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 242–243; *Opera*, III, 194–195.

<sup>10</sup> Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*. See also Den Uyl, *Power, State and Freedom*, 33 ff and Rice, 'Individual and Community in Spinoza's Social Psychology'.



however, is the product of an exegetical exercise, which inevitably presupposes a definite historical distance from the corpus to be analysed and which consciously ignores the contemporary context from which these texts arose and which their author sought to address. The same holds for Michael della Rocca's recent analysis of Spinoza's philosophy of mind, including his psychology. Both have been shown to be deeply engrained in his metaphysics (although some gaps have been noted).<sup>11</sup>

Once one tries to understand how Spinoza's thought related to its immediate context, a very different picture emerges. From a late-seventeenth-century point of view, Spinoza seems to be first and foremost a thinker who destroyed the metaphysics of substance, and who proposed a change of direction in philosophy, away from metaphysics and natural philosophy to psychology and politics. In a very important essay, John Cottingham has recently suggested, that in general 'it would perhaps not be too much to say that the presence or absence of the term "substance", and the explanatory framework associated with it, is the single most reliable indicator which divides the "ancient" and the "modern" worlds.'<sup>12</sup> After this, Cottingham invokes an imaginary seventeenth century,

in which Galileo escaped ecclesiastical censure and in which, as a result, Descartes went public with his *World*—a starkly radical version of a new science largely free of the trappings of traditional metaphysics. In this alternative world he might have gone on to challenge the whole scholastic framework of substance.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, Spinoza also figures in this possible seventeenth century:

In many respects he is the most uncompromisingly 'modern' of the great seventeenth-century writers in his firm allegiance to the principles of Cartesian science, in his vigorous rejection of finalism, in his independent-minded insistence that man must come to terms with his fate unprotected by the comforts of revealed religion.<sup>14</sup>

In view of the early Dutch reception of Spinoza, it is perhaps not at all as far-fetched as Cottingham feels, to conceive of his philosophy without its metaphysics of substance and attribute. If anything, the contemporary rejection of Spinozism only goes to enhance its

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<sup>11</sup> Della Rocca, 'Spinoza's Metaphysical Psychology' and *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*.

<sup>12</sup> Cottingham, 'A New Start?', 159.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

modernity, and the main question raised by the perfectly lucid observations of Spinoza's first critics seems to be whether Spinoza actually needs a monist metaphysics. Both his epistemology and his psychology, including the moral philosophy of the latter part of the *Ethics*, are based, not on the insight that ultimately reality consists of a single substance, but rather on his 'parallelism', the claim put forward in the seventh proposition of *Ethics* II, that 'The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.'<sup>15</sup> The technicalities involved in the concept of substance play no role in his political philosophy, which is based on the famous *conatus*-theory: 'Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being' (*Ethics*, III, 6).<sup>16</sup> This, significantly, refers to the modal reality, produced by the attributes. What had often been regarded as Spinoza's mysticism is not so much concerned with the unity of God, as with the unity of reality at large. It therefore leaves the time-honoured interpretation of Spinoza as a naturalist *pur sang* perfectly intact. If anything, a radically historical reading of Spinozism would seem to dovetail nicely, for example, with Antonio Negri's much debated and strictly philosophical hypothesis regarding 'a second foundation' of Spinoza's philosophy, which takes extremely seriously the fact that the concept of substance has hardly any role to play after the second book of the *Ethics*, and makes way for the crucial notion of the individual mode, characterised by its *conatus*, or its spontaneous force.<sup>17</sup>

As a consequence, it would only seem natural to expect at least some contemporary debate on Spinoza's practical philosophy. It was, however, not to be: Spinoza's countrymen seem to have largely missed the basically social and practical intentions of his philosophical programme. In comparison to the acute and often lucid observations of his many detractors on the details of his interpretation of Scripture — and, once the *Ethics* was published, his employment of the Cartesian concepts of substance, attributes and so on, it is striking that with a few exceptions such as Van Velthuysen, Spinoza's moral and political philosophy were hardly dealt with. During the final decades of the seventeenth century, neither the final parts of the *Ethics*, nor the concluding chapters of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* — nor, for that matter, the unfinished *Tractatus politicus* — elicited the kind of

<sup>15</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 451; *Opera*, II, 89.

<sup>16</sup> Spinoza, *Works*, 498; *Opera*, II, 146.

<sup>17</sup> Negri, *L'Anomalie sauvage*. See, however, Matheron, 'L'Anomalie sauvage d'Antonio Negri'.

detailed response, that was provoked by his theology and by his metaphysics. This seems all the more curious since Spinoza was not the only Dutch Cartesian to compose a moral philosophy. In 1665, at Leiden, the Flemish philosopher Arnout Geulincx also published an *Ethica*.<sup>18</sup>

In particular the lack of interest in Spinoza's republicanism is remarkable. For Spinoza, in the *Tractatus* explicitly supports the States party. In line with Grotius, and the Dutch admirers of Hobbes, Spinoza felt that in the Republic 'sovereign right was always vested in the Estates', and 'that in modern times religion (...) belongs solely to the right of the sovereign'. The Revolt itself was nothing but an act of rightful resistance against the monarchical ambitions of a Spanish 'count': 'Therefore it is by no means true that the Estates revolted against him, when in fact they recovered their sovereignty which had been almost lost.'<sup>19</sup> History, Spinoza continued, also shows how dangerous governmental interference in religious disputes can be. Dutch history in particular, provides ample illustrations of the perils of curtailing people's freedom. Spinoza recalled the traumatic events which took place at Dordrecht some 50 years earlier, only to contrast the sorry fate of the first Remonstrants with the many advantages of De Witt's 'True Freedom':

Take the city of Amsterdam, which enjoys the fruits of this freedom, to its own considerable prosperity and the admiration of the world. In this flourishing state, a city of the highest renown, men of every race and sect live in complete harmony; and before entrusting their property to some person they will want to know no more than this, whether he is rich or poor and whether he has been honest or dishonest in his dealings. As for religion or sect, that is of no account, because such considerations are regarded as irrelevant in a court of law; and no sect whatsoever is so hated that its adherents—provided that they injure no one, render to each what is his own, and live upright lives—are denied the protection of the civil authorities.<sup>20</sup>

Paradoxically, perhaps, it is precisely in his analysis of the political history of the Hebrews that the topicality of the *Tractatus* becomes evident. The eighteenth chapter of the *Tractatus* draws a number of highly topical conclusions from the the history of 'the commonwealth of the Hebrews' which tells us

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<sup>18</sup> Geulincx, *De virtute et primis ejus proprietatibus*. The full text was only published in 1679. A Dutch translation of the first part appeared in 1667 in Leiden: *Van de hooft-deuchden*.

<sup>19</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 279 and 286; *Opera*, III, 228 and 234–235.

<sup>20</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 298; *Opera*, III, 245–246.

1. How disastrous it is for both religion and state to grant to religious functionaries any right to issue decrees or to concern themselves with state business (..)
2. How dangerous it is to refer to religious jurisdiction matters that are purely philosophical, and to legislate concerning beliefs that are frequently subject to dispute, or can so be (..)
3. How essential it is for both commonwealth and religion that the sovereign power should be given the right to decide what is right and what is wrong (..)
4. Finally we see how fatal it is for a people unaccustomed to the rule of Kings, and already possessing established laws, to set up a monarchy ...<sup>21</sup>

De la Court had illustrated with humanist references to Roman antiquity, the dangers of establishing a monarchy to rule over a people accustomed to living in a republic, but Spinoza's Hebrew arguments were just as topical. As a young man, Grotius had also written a tract 'on the emendation of the Dutch polity' on the basis of a comparison of the emerging Republic to the Hebrew commonwealth.<sup>22</sup> During the seventeenth century, comparing the fate of the Republic to the Old Testament had become common practice: from the early days of the Revolt, the fate of the people of Israel was evoked by the Dutch, in order to justify their own rebellion. Moses' flight from Egypt and his guidance of an elect nation, served as a divinely sanctioned historical parallel.<sup>23</sup> In sixteenth-century Beggar-songs, both William of Orange and his son Maurice were repeatedly identified with Moses, just as the Spanish Habsburgs were with the Pharaohs. And this tradition was not confined to Calvinist circles. The Catholic poet Vondel in his play *Het Pascha* (ca. 1610, first published in 1612), written when he was still a Mennonite, made the point that the histories of Israel and the Netherlands were scarcely distinguishable.<sup>24</sup>

Nor did this tradition end with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. An eighteenth-century divine such as Gosuinus van Kessel (1703–1756) thought nothing of calling William of Orange, Maurice, and his successor Frederick Henry 'Moses, Joshua and Caleb.'<sup>25</sup> His colleague C. van Velzen (1696–1752) dubbed William

<sup>21</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 275–277; *Opera*, III, 225–226.

<sup>22</sup> V.H., *Consideratien van Staat*, 284 ff. See also Grotius, *De Republica Emendanda*.

<sup>23</sup> Groenhuis, 'Calvinism and National Consciousness'. See also Van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies*, 218–220.

<sup>24</sup> Vondel, *Volledige dichtwerken en oorspronkelijk proza*, 26. See also Hooft, *Gedichten*, I, 104. Cf. Smit, *Van Pascha tot Noah*, I, 31–60; Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition*, 100–110; Spies, 'Verbeeldingen van vrijheid'.

<sup>25</sup> Bisschop, *Sions vorst en volk*, 127. Cf. 133.

of Orange and Jan van Nassau the Dutch 'Moses' and 'Aaron', and the Eighty Years' War as 'our' crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>26</sup> Similar remarks are to be found in the writings of such orthodox Calvinists as J. d'Outrein (1662–1732), A. van Hardeveldt (?–1777), Carolus Tuinman (1659–1728) and Johannes Blomhert (1694–1738), to name only a few.<sup>27</sup> Characteristically, this tendency to depict the House of Orange as a tool of divine providence, led some ministers to invoke fictitious genealogies, attempting to show its descent from the Roman aristocracy, just as the House of Habsburg claimed descent from Aeneas,<sup>28</sup> or Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) attempted to prove that the French nation owed its natural superiority to its being descended from Gomer, the eldest son of Noah.<sup>29</sup> Let us not forget, that as Don Cameron Allen, Paolo Rossi and Stuart Piggott have shown, Gomer in early modern Europe was widely regarded as the ancestor of all the peoples of the west.<sup>30</sup>

The stunning success of the emerging Republic in the course of the seventeenth century, was interpreted by many contemporary observers as another proof of the historical similarity between these two unique nations, both of which were blessed by God's special favour. Although some Dutch Calvinists recognized that, recently, British Puritans had also been favoured by the Lord, this did not lead them to doubt that the Netherlands was the true 'Zion'. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the example that Moses had set continued to inspire Orthodox ministers, despite their theocratic aspirations failing to materialize. Their attempt to redefine public morality was constantly justified with references to Moses. In some cases they themselves were identified with Moses, as was the case with the Rotterdammer Abraham Hellenbroek (1658–1731).<sup>31</sup> To an increasing extent, however, Dutch Calvinists came to regard their theocratic mission as a spiritual affair. In Jodocus van Lodensteyn's (1622–1677) eyes, for example, 'Babel' no longer stood for Roman

<sup>26</sup> Huisman, *Neerlands Israël*, 55.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–57. Cf. 74–75.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 109; Van Boskoop, *Het in de beginselen verhoogde Nederlandt*, Aanspraak, \*\*\*\*\*2; Van Schelle, *De vorstelijke zonne*, 24. See also Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas*.

<sup>29</sup> Postel, *Le Thésor des Prophéties de l'Univers*. See Bouwsma, *The Career and Thought of Guillaume de Postel*, 219ff; Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*; Kuntz, 'Guillaume Postel and the World State', esp. 445–465.

<sup>30</sup> Allen, *The Legend of Noah*; Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time*; Piggott, *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination*.

<sup>31</sup> Bisschop, *Sions vorst en volk*, 97.

Catholicism, Spain or France. To him it was simply the mounting spiritual crisis within the Republic; 'Zion' no longer denoted the Republic, but the Dutch Reformed church, the *ecclesia militans*. The great advantage of this vision was that the story of Israel could also be regarded as recounting the fate of those who had rejected God's favour. For in spite of its being an elect nation, Israel had also been disobedient, and with disastrous consequences.<sup>32</sup> In the eyes of the Dutch, Moses therefore increasingly became a spiritual leader rather than an example of divinely sanctioned political leadership.<sup>33</sup> Ministers were increasingly regarded as 'Watchmen on Sion's Walls'. During the seventeenth century, as the identification with Israel gradually grew more metaphorical, Jerusalem was also used to refer to the entire Reformed movement, including the Huguenots.<sup>34</sup>

Belief in the political and spiritual topicality of Moses was shared by most Voetian and Cocceian theologians. Although the Cocceians may have felt that Moses' ritual ordinances concerning the Sabbath, for example, may no longer have been relevant, this does not appear to have arisen from a different view of his ultimate significance. Again, Spinoza had every right to expect substantial interest in his assessment of Moses' politics. Yet once the *Tractatus* had been published, Batelier, Bredenburg and Kuyper completely ignored the last chapters of the *Tractatus*. Van Blyenbergh reluctantly devoted a few pages to them,<sup>35</sup> but Van Mansvelt was the only early Dutch critic of the *Tractatus* who took the trouble to discuss Spinoza's political philosophy at any length.<sup>36</sup> It may well have been the case that the Cartesian majority among his early Dutch audience remained silent on his *politica*, since its outcome was just too close to what the 'Loevestein' Cartesians had argued for ever since the 1650s. Clearly, during the 1670s there was little to gain from the association with Spinozism. Again, Spinoza's obvious failure to make an impact on the Dutch Cartesians of his time raises profound questions as to his precise relationship to Cartesianism as such. As we shall see, it is remarkable that not even the few 'Spinozists' who have been detected in the seventeenth-century Republic made much of his political philosophy.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. Cf. 102-104.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>35</sup> Van Blyenbergh, *De Waerheyt*, 456-467.

<sup>36</sup> Van Mansvelt, *Adversus*, 274-364.

Analysing the relatively isolated position of Spinoza and of his political philosophy in particular, it does not suffice to confine oneself to studying the philosophical and theological reactions Spinozism provoked. Just as the first emergence of some of the more radical varieties of 'Cartesianism', including Spinoza's, needs to be placed against the background of the first Stadholderless age, the subsequent history of Dutch Spinozism should be understood in terms of its theologico-political and scientific context. After 1672 the political and intellectual landscape of the Republic changed considerably. The nature of these changes will enable us to understand the early history of Dutch Spinozism. Spinoza's fears concerning the stability of the 'True Freedom', first expressed in 1665, in his letter to Oldenburg, in which he announced the composition of the *Tractatus*, would soon turn out to be completely justified. As he was writing this particular letter, the second Anglo-Dutch War was just beginning to get under way.

It would, however, not be the English who brought the Republic to its knees. The greatest danger came from the South, and Louis XIV's increasingly aggressive foreign policies became positively threatening after the secret Pact of Dover between England and France, in 1670. Meanwhile, the young Prince of Orange was no longer so very young, and speculation about his future role in the Republic was only natural. When he turned 18, at the end of 1668, he increasingly started to act as the Prince he was. When it became clear that France was indeed heading for a major conflict with its northern neighbours, and when the States party had grown more and more divided over the measures to be taken, on February 24th 1672, William was appointed captain and admiral-general of the States General. This measure temporarily eased Orangist pressure, but could not make up for the poor state the army was in. Neither could it halt the disastrous course of events that were to come. To quote Jonathan Israel:

The year 1672 was the most traumatic of the Dutch Golden Age. It was a year of military collapse, of almost complete demoralization, the moment when the overthrow of the Republic, if not in its entirety, then certainly as a major power, seemed at hand. It was the year of the greatest crash on the Amsterdam Exchange of early modern times, paralysing Dutch commerce and finance, the year when public building ceased and the art market withered, with consequences for art, artists, and architecture noticeable for decades to come. It was also a year of sensational domestic political events and feverish ideological conflict. Finally, it was the year when the common populace and militias inter-

vened in the political process, and ideological warfare, more extensively than at any time since the 1580s with lasting consequences for political and social life.<sup>37</sup>

By May, England, France, the bishop of Münster and the Elector of Cologne had all declared war on the Republic. By the end of June, Utrecht had been captured by the French. Holland and Zeeland looked utterly defenceless. In all the major towns of Holland the populace erupted. Rumours concerning the treacherous selling out of the Republic by the regents incited masses of Orangists to take to the street and demand the elevation of the Prince to the Stadholderate. In Rotterdam in particular, the houses of the regents—traditionally suspect on account of their religious heterodoxy—were sacked. By early July Zeeland and Holland had in fact proclaimed William III Stadholder. A few days earlier, Johan de Witt had already been attacked with a knife, and on August 20th he was lynched, together with his brother Cornelis in The Hague. William was granted the privilege to personally reconsider the constitution of the town councils in Holland, which enabled him to remove the more radical ‘Loevestein’ regents throughout the province. In towns such as Rotterdam a definite continuity was to be discerned with the events during the Truce, half a century before. In a sense, it was only fitting that in this town one of the regents removed would be Pieter de Groot, son of Grotius himself.<sup>38</sup> Spinoza, who at the time was living in The Hague, witnessed the collapse of the De Witt regime, and the installation of William III as the new Stadholder. One of the immediate consequences of this dramatic reversal of fortune was the temporary increase in State censorship. For in 1674 the States of Holland officially prohibited the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, Meyer’s *Interpres*, and Spinoza’s *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>39</sup> Two years later, Abraham Heidanus was removed from his chair in Leiden.

This Orangist offensive did not mean the end of Cartesianism in the Netherlands. In fact, quite the opposite was true: Cartesianism would continue to dominate the practice of philosophy in the Dutch Republic both inside and outside the universities, and Spinoza also had his own following. One might well ask who these Dutch Spinozists were. Apart from a very small ‘school’ of Spinozan logicians, which included the prominent lawyer from The Hague Abraham Cuffeler

<sup>37</sup> Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 796.

<sup>38</sup> Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic*, 119–221; D.J. Roorda, ‘Rotterdam in het rampjaar’.

<sup>39</sup> Israel, ‘The Banning of Spinoza’s Works in the Dutch Republic’.



(1643–1690) and the Calvinist minister Petrus van Balen (1637–1694),<sup>40</sup> the first Dutch followers of Spinoza were either inspired by the mystical overtones of his concept of substance, or by his critique of revelation. They speculated about God's omnipotence and man being part of the divine substance, or they revelled in Spinoza's analysis of prophecy, biblical miracles and the authorship of the Pentateuch. As far as the first tradition is concerned, to which Mennonites such as Pieter Balling and Jarig Jelles belonged, the Collegiant Bredenburg and such heterodox Calvinists as Willem Deurhoff, Frederik van Leenhof (1647–1712) and Pontiaan van Hattem (1645–1706), were mainly occupied with Spinoza's necessitarian metaphysics.

In the past much has been made of these Christian Spinozists. Balling and Jelles were, after all, among the philosopher's closest personal friends. And although Spinoza himself may have been severely criticized by his contemporaries over his reading of Scripture, in the *Tractatus* he discusses at length the salutary effects of faith. In the first chapter, Spinoza claimed that 'Christ communed with God mind to mind'.<sup>41</sup> Anyone who follows His commandments will be saved and this does not require the development of any 'philosophical' knowledge regarding God's essence: 'The message of the Gospel is one of simple faith; that is, belief in God and reverence for God, or—which is the same thing—obedience to God.'<sup>42</sup> Moses too, is praised for his brilliant leadership and for his wisdom not to install a monarchy after his death, despite his being perfectly able to do so.<sup>43</sup> But not many Dutch Spinozists appear to have been particularly interested in Spinoza's assessment of faith, nor in his views on the moral and political lessons that are to be drawn from the Old Testament. Instead, the author they admired, much resembled the one whose views had been so violently attacked by Van Velthuysen, Batelier, Van Mansvelt and Bredenburg.

The most striking example of this was Johannes Bredenburg himself, erstwhile critic of the *Tractatus*, who was to become the best known 'Spinozist' of his time. He was a Rotterdam wine-merchant and Collegiant, whose critique of the *Tractatus* has already been dis-

<sup>40</sup> Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza*, 143–163 on Van Cuffeler and 187–204 on Van Balen. For the latter, see also Van Balen, *De verbetering der gedagten*.

<sup>41</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 65 (cf. 107–109); *Opera*, III, 21 (cf. 64–66).

<sup>42</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 221; *Opera*, III, 174.

<sup>43</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 256–257; *Opera*, III, 207–208. See also Zac, 'Spinoza et l'état des Hébreux'; Terpstra, 'De betekenis van de Oudtestamentische theocratie'.

cussed above.<sup>44</sup> Bredenburg issued his *Enervatio*, probably at least in part to still the rumours concerning his secret admiration for Spinoza's metaphysics. What set his particular refutation of Spinoza's plea for toleration apart from the many others, was his insistence that if and where theology and philosophy contradict each other, theology should give way.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, he added two 'geometrical proofs' in which he tried to deconstruct what he took to be Spinoza's metaphysics. According to the first proof, Spinoza's identification of God and nature leads to a full-blown determinism. In the second he argues that the concept of a *Deus sive Natura* is logically impossible, because it involves the notion of God being an effect—that is, a creature. These proofs, clumsily formulated though they may be, are of considerable interest, if only because they convey that their author must have been in possession of Spinozan texts which had not been published yet. Bredenburg, for instance, makes much of Spinoza's distinction between *natura naturans* and *naturata*, which only occurs in the *Opera Posthuma* and in the *Korte Verhandeling*, which was not published until the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Shortly after the publication of his *Enervatio*, however, Bredenburg suddenly changed his mind. Suddenly, he could no longer find fault in Spinoza's 'geometric' determinism. Since he persisted to argue that philosophy supersedes theological arguments, and since he also continued to hold that a universal determinism destroyed the basis of Christianity, he now fell victim to a deep, personal crisis. He wanted to believe, or so he told his friends, but, rationally, he could no longer defend his faith.

In 1684 his opponents within the Collegiant movement published a short *Mathematical demonstration*, composed by Bredenburg some years earlier, to prove once and for all that there was an atheist in their midst, a secret admirer of Spinoza, who should, of course, be banned from the Collegiant gatherings. A huge row followed. Several dozens of pamphlets appeared, some written by such distinguished scholars as the Remonstrant professor Phillip van Limborch (1633–1712) and the Jewish physician Isaac Orobio de Castro (1620–1687).<sup>47</sup> In fact, the so-called 'Bredenburger quarrels', which

<sup>44</sup> See Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans Église*, 250–292, Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, 215–246; Van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg*; Scribano, 'Johannes Bredenburg'.

<sup>45</sup> Bredenburg, *Enervatio Tractatus Theologico-Politici*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> On the basis of Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans Église*, 256, I have tried to show that Bredenburg by the time he composed his *Enervatio*, must have been in possession of a manuscript of either the *Korte Verhandeling*, or the *Ethics* itself: 'Johannes Bredenburg and the *Korte Verhandeling*'.

<sup>47</sup> Bredenburg, *Wiskunstige Demonstratie*; Van Limborch, *Schriftelijke onderhandeling*;

took place between 1684 and 1688 constituted the first public debate on the philosophy of Spinoza. Tellingly, not a single participant of the debate argued in favour of Spinoza. The many pleas on behalf of Bredenburg, all written by fellow-Collegiants, seem to have been inspired by the belief that Bredenburg's desire to believe *despite* his philosophical insights was sincere. In fact, his most important critic, the socinian Frans Kuyper, was generally considered to be a perfectly unreliable hypocrite. Even more informative seems to be the fact that not a single Collegiant cared to refer to Spinoza's personal friendship with Amsterdam Collegiants such as Balling and Jelles. This is all the more significant since Jelles, in his Preface to Spinoza's *Opera*, had gone out of his way to demonstrate that the philosophy of his friend should in no way be seen to contradict the teachings of Christ.<sup>48</sup> Jelles' admiration for Spinoza hardly seems representative for the general attitude among these 'Christians without Church'. In the end, Bredenburg gave up his 'Spinozism'. In 1691 he died as a fideist, admitting that within the realm of faith, reason should be silent, faith providing its own justification. In short, Bredenburg was one of those religious adventurers who, although under no rule of faith, let faith rule in the end. It almost goes without saying, that the most astute fideist of the time, who by chance also happened to live in Rotterdam, was enchanted by the story of this troubled merchant. He made inquiries with Bredenburg's son, and reported his findings in his *Dictionaire* of 1697.<sup>49</sup>

Among the 'Christian' Spinozists of the time, only Van Leenhof seems to have been interested in Spinoza's political philosophy. To be sure, especially the efforts of the Zwolle followers of Van Leenhof and the Zeeland 'Hattemists' in particular did have political consequences.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the Hattemists' dependence on Spinoza seems to have been rather limited, Michiel Wielema has shown how Van Leenhof's *Den Hemel op Aarden* (Heaven on Earth, 1703) presented a practical Spinozism, intelligently accommodated to the common man. Curiously, Van Leenhof continued to deny his Spinozan lean-

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Orobio de Castro, *Certamen Philosophicum*. On both critics of Bredenburg fine biographies are available: Barnouw, *Philippus van Limborch* and Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*. On the curious afterlife of Orobio's *Certamen* in the 'littérature clandestine' of the early French Enlightenment, see my 'Les origines et la signification de la *Traduction française*'.

<sup>48</sup> Akkerman and Hubbeling, 'The Preface to Spinoza's Posthumous Works'.

<sup>49</sup> Bayle, *Dictionaire historique et critique*, art. Spinoza, rem. M.

<sup>50</sup> Van der Bijl, *Idee en interest*, esp. 40 ff, 172–181 and 276 ff; Wielema, 'Spinoza in Zeeland'; Israel, 'Les controverses pamphlétaires'.

ings, despite the many obvious similarities between his work and Spinoza's writings. Van Leenhof's attempt to show how 'Laetitia' improves the quality of life of the individual and his society alike actually served as the point of departure for a rather interesting *politica*. It does not, however, seem to have spread beyond Van Leenhof's local congregation.<sup>51</sup> The authorities' swift reaction to Van Leenhof's popular Spinozism seems to have forestalled the spreading of it beyond his Zwolle flock.

So far, a number of conclusions have been reached. Once we regard Spinoza's writings from a strictly historical perspective, they reveal a strong dependence on the cultural history of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, which they reflect and comment upon abundantly. We have also seen that a radically historical approach to Spinozism seems to lend support to a very particular philosophical interpretation of Spinoza's intentions in that a historical reading of Spinoza's work leads us to a new awareness of Spinoza's concern for the 'modal' aspects of reality and for the practical ramifications of his thought. In view of the apparent topicality of the *Tractatus* in particular, Spinoza's failure to raise substantial support for his views in the Republic may well seem all the more remarkable. Before I address this issue, however, it is necessary to inquire why the reformed authorities were so particularly keen to call a halt to the proliferation of Spinozism. In my view, this had much to do with the anxiety over Balthasar Bekker's (1634–1698) infamous *De betoverde Weereld*.

## 2. 'The World Bewitched'

Balthasar Bekker was born in 1634 in Friesland, the son of a clergyman, and it seems that he was a late convert to Cartesianism.<sup>52</sup> Only after he received his doctorate in theology, in 1665 from Franeker, did he publish a *De philosophia Cartesiana admonitio et sincera* (1668). Henceforth, he was considered a member of the Cartesian orthodoxy, which carefully distinguished between the realms of philosophy and theology. He must have been a man of peculiar charm. For despite his notoriously bad looks, he married a young, beautiful and

<sup>51</sup> Wielema, *Ketters en verlichters*, Chapter 3. See also Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans Église*, 315–348; Israel, 'Spinoza, King Solomon and Frederik van Leenhof's Spinozistic Republicanism'.

<sup>52</sup> See on Bekker, Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker; De Vet, Pieter Rabus*, 221–331; Fix, *Fallen Angels*.

even rich girl, who preferred this ugly minister to a general, a baron no less, who had also asked for her hand in marriage. In 1683, after having published a series of strictly theological studies, he issued an essay on the meaning of the comets of the early 1680s, which inspired Bayle to write his *Lettre sur la comète* (1682).<sup>53</sup> Above all, Bekker called for caution: as long as we do not know what comets are, we are best advised to refrain from passing judgement on the meaning they might carry for mankind. Apart from his insistence that there is no significant scriptural basis for the belief in the prophesying intent of comets, he observed that since such portents always have to be deciphered *post factum*, their prophetic relevance can never be great.

His next major work concerned a detailed analysis of the prophet Daniel, which was issued in 1688, shortly after he had become a minister in Amsterdam.<sup>54</sup> Although it did not provoke any reactions at the time, his commentary on *Daniel* seems to have had a profound effect on his future career, since it contained a detailed response to Cocceius' views on the prophet. In fact, this scholarly book of over 700 pages in many places delivers a fiercely polemical attack on the millenarian tendencies, which by this time were becoming increasingly popular both among the Voetian and the Cocceian branches of the Dutch Reformed Church. Shortly after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and on the brink of the Glorious Revolution, many ministers seem to have found it hard to resist millenarian readings of *Daniel* and the *Book of Revelation* in particular. It should be added, that, on the whole, the kind of militant millenarianism that raged during the English Civil War and, most famously still inspired Isaac Newton, never acquired a comparable popularity in the Republic.<sup>55</sup>

In the Preface to his commentary on *Daniel*, Bekker complained that over the last few years, far too many ministers had spent too much of their sermons pondering the prophecies concerning 'the fate of Israel, the fear of death, the seven periods, the beast with the seven heads, the whore of Babylon and the Roman Antichrist'. According

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<sup>53</sup> Bekker, *Onderszoek van de Betekeninge der Kometen*. See Van Sluis, 'Balthasar Bekker in 1683'; Van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-Faced Janus*, 380–388; Jorink, 'Van omineuze tot glorieuze tekens'.

<sup>54</sup> Bekker, *Uitlegginge van den Propheet Daniel*. See my 'Balthasar Bekker on *Daniel*'.

<sup>55</sup> Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*; Carp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*; Liu, *Discord in Zion*; Ball, *A Great Expectation*; Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*. On Newton, see Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton*, esp. 83 ff; Popkin, 'Newton's Biblical Theology and his Theological Physics' and 'Newton as Bible Scholar'; Hutton, 'More, Newton and the Language of Biblical Prophecy'; Kochavi, 'One Prophet Interprets Another'.

to Bekker there are far more important themes to be dealt with in theology. And speculations on the fulfillment of biblical prophecies will not lead sinners to the path of righteousness, nor will they convert a single Roman Catholic. To his mind, careful study of the prophecies in the Old Testament revealed that they are exclusively concerned with the history of the Jewish people up until the destruction of the Temple of Solomon. Before Christ's birth, God was exclusively Israel's God, and the sole function of *Daniel* was to confirm His presence to His people, and to assure the Jews that their delivery was at hand.<sup>56</sup> To put it differently:

Suppose that nowadays a prophecy were to be made to France, or to England or to the city of Amsterdam, which predicted great wars and persecutions that would happen to them: would there be any one who would come up with the idea that these events should not be applied to these countries or this city, but instead to the unknown South-pole, the Northeastern part of the empire of the Tartars, or to darkest Africa?<sup>57</sup>

As will be familiar, Daniel foresaw four succeeding kingdoms, that were to be smashed by a fifth and final kingdom, presumably to be established by the Messiah (*Daniel* 2:31–45). According to millenarian interpretations of *Daniel*, the advent of this final kingdom is, of course, a *future* event. In Bekker's eyes, however, the fundamental mistake of all Protestant millenarians consisted of identifying the fourth kingdom with the Roman Empire, and in further stretching the ancient Roman empire to include the present German Roman Empire or the papacy. In reality, Bekker continued, the kingdom of Christ was established in the first century. Jesus proved himself to be the Messiah, whose reign is of a spiritual nature, which consequently must be deemed eternal.<sup>58</sup>

Bekker's interpretation of *Daniel* drew on an ancient tradition, first established by Porphyry, and continued by Grotius. According to the latter, the author of *Daniel* was particularly opposed to Antiochus Epiphanes, one of Alexander's successors who from 176 to 164 ruled over Syria and under whom the Jews suffered terribly. According to this tradition, the small horn on the head of the fourth monster foreseen by the prophet (7:24), which by millenarians had always been identified with the Anti-Christ, in reality was no other than this Seleucid tyrant. Cocceius, however, in his *Observationes ad Danielelem* of 1666, had been fiercely critical of Grotius' siding with

<sup>56</sup> Bekker, *Uitlegginge van den Propheet Daniel*, 284–288.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 677.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 350–366.

the heathen Porphyry, arguing that Daniel had obviously meant to refer to the Pope as the future Anti-Christ. Bekker, however, basically agreed with Grotius' understanding of the prophets as being essentially Jewish.<sup>59</sup> Had Bekker left it that, he would surely have come in for a severe rebuke from the Cocceian and other millenarian factions within the Republic. That his commentary on *Daniel* did not provoke any substantial reaction might perhaps be explained by the peculiar twist Bekker gave to his basically Grotian treatment of the prophet. Starting from the Grotian premiss that the story of Daniel has to be understood mainly as an episode in the history of the people of Israel, he finally succeeded in presenting Christ as the complete fulfillment of this very story. All the biblical prophecies were fulfilled some 1600 years ago, and all that remains to be done is for us to realize this very fact, since this is what our Christian faith should be based upon, namely the realisation that Jesus is the Messiah announced in the Old Testament, that Jesus is, in fact, Christ.<sup>60</sup>

After he had finished his critique of contemporary millenarianism, Bekker returned to a project that had already been occupying him for some time, and that would finally result in *De betoverde Weereld*. The first two volumes appeared in 1691, and were followed by the third and fourth in 1693. In the first, Bekker describes the feelings, held around the world, about God, good and evil spirits, and the devil. He writes about pre-Christian times, and turns his attention to soothsaying and sorcery. Bekker compares these habits to those of contemporary heathens in Lapland and in Finland, in Asia (arguing for example that the Chinese are Pythagoreans),<sup>61</sup> in Africa and in America; among Jews, Muslims, and finally, among the first Christians. All these societies have this one matter in common: that their magical *praxis* is rooted in the belief of direct contact with the supernatural. Wanting to trace the origins of contemporary beliefs in sorcery, Bekker finds these in Manicheism, and reinvigorated by the Roman Catholics.<sup>62</sup> Borrowing heavily from the Jesuit Caspar Schott's *Physica curiosa* (1662), Bekker found great delight in depicting Catholic superstition, after which he finally turned to his own,

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 692 ff. See Grotius, *Opera Omnia Theologica*, I, 453–485; *Ad Daniele*m and Cocceius, *Opera Omnia Theologica*, III-2, 309–366. Cf. Van den Berg, 'Grotius' Views on Antichrist and Apocalyptic Thought in England'; Van der Wall, 'Between Grotius and Coccejus'; De Jonge, 'Hugo Grotius: exégète du Nouveau Testament'.

<sup>60</sup> Bekker, *Uitlegginge van den Propheet Daniel*, 565–577 and 717–718.

<sup>61</sup> Bekker, *De betoverde Weereld*, I, 32. (The *editio princeps* of the first volume appeared in 1691 in Leeuwarden.) See my 'Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics'.

<sup>62</sup> Bekker, *De betoverde Weereld*, I, 97–107.

Protestant tradition. Although in his view the Reformation had done much to quell many of the more exuberant superstitions, he somberly concluded his first volume with the observation that apparently 'popish' prejudices have not yet altogether been removed from the reformed church.<sup>63</sup> This is, however, precisely what he would try to accomplish in the second volume of *De betoverde Weereld*.

Bekker started the second part innocently enough by pointing out that he would follow both the natural and the scriptural road to enlightenment. Reason told him that there is a God, that He is incorporeal, that there may be spirits, that spirit and body have nothing in common, and that spirits can exist apart from the body. Spirits, according to Bekker, are substances produced by God and differentiated by their attributes, just like bodies are. Spirits are *thinking* substances, bodies are *extended* substances.<sup>64</sup> Man is a compound of both; angels are pure thinking substances in that they have no bodies. On created spirits (the human and the angelic alike), Bekker further commented that they have no 'place': although we say that a spirit is somehow 'in' the body it affects, a spirit contemplating for example a foreign city is 'in' that city, as well as 'in' the one its body happens to inhabit. Thus King William on his way to England only three years earlier was accompanied by many thousands of spirits, wishing him and his mission well. As far as non-human spirits are concerned, Bekker argued that reason does not prove that angels do in fact exist, only that they are possible. Scripture, however, shows their actual existence. But it does not say anything definite about their activities. One thing seems certain: since we only know about other spirits by comparing them to our own soul, we simply have to conclude that since our soul without our body cannot affect other souls nor other bodies, a spirit that is without any body in the first place will *never* be able to influence anything at all.<sup>65</sup> All a bodiless spirit can do is think. It is, so to say, totally self-contained.

Immediately after the publication of these first two volumes a huge row broke out, and in 1692 Bekker was suspended from his post in Amsterdam. In a few years time over three-hundred books and pamphlets appeared, the vast majority of which were extremely critical of Bekker and his book. Since Bekker felt forced to issue several—painfully confused—replies to his critics, the publication of the third and fourth volumes was postponed until 1693. The third

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 128–136.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 18.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 33–37.



part is concerned with the many practices of sorcery, allegedly based on pacts with the devil. Since Satan is incarcerated in hell, demonic sorcery, again, is impossible. Once more, Bekker investigated the biblical evidence at hand, only in order to conclude once again that this evidence is non-existent. In the fourth and final volume of *De betoverde Weereld* Bekker returned to the question of the origin of the stories about the supernatural. Skillfully dissecting a large number of more recent supernatural accounts, he denounced these tales as the products of fear, fraud and prejudice.

The details of the proceedings against Bekker do not have to concern us here. He was permanently relieved of his ministry, and died in 1698 a bitter man. Several lessons can be drawn from his fate. In the first place, it should be noted that once the storm had broken out over his views, the habitual coalition between Cartesians and Cocceians this time failed to materialize. The Cocceian faction must have felt that here was a Cartesian, a theologian no less, who had betrayed their common cause by his earlier critique of Cocceius' millenarianism. As a matter of fact, several prominent Cocceians were now among Bekker's fiercest opponents. Secondly, Bekker's curious pneumatology in particular, cried out for criticism. One critic simply argued that Bekker was forced to deny the working of God Himself on bodies as well, since God too is purely spiritual.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Bekker was asked, how exactly it was that he knew that angels are like human beings, but without bodies?<sup>67</sup> And what about the alleged difference between good and evil spirits?<sup>68</sup> How could it be that a spirit has no particular place to dwell in? Our soul must be *somewhere* in our body—near the pineal gland perhaps, one commentator suggested mockingly?<sup>69</sup>

Thirdly and most importantly, *De betoverde Weereld* is arguably the most telling illustration of the dangers inherent in the Cartesian employment of the principle of accommodation. Bekker saw God's accommodation at work at all relevant levels. In the second volume of *De betoverde Weereld* he declared that God had to reveal Himself in all His glory in the very imperfect medium of human language, which is 'in the power of the people'. Learned men too will have to suit themselves to the conventions ruled by the *vulgus*. They, however, can make use of a scientific style. The Bible can do no such thing,

<sup>66</sup> Brink, *De Godslasteringen van de Amsterdamsche Predikant Dr. Bekker*, Preface.

<sup>67</sup> Molinaeus, *De betoverde Werelt van D. Balthazar Bekker*, 55.

<sup>68</sup> Muys van Holy, *Overweging van het hooftpoint in Do. Bekkers boek*.

<sup>69</sup> Verryn, *Aenmerckingen op de Betoverde Werelt*, 26 ff.

for Scripture is solely designed to instill faith, not to clarify 'natural things'.<sup>70</sup> Christ in turn was often a Jew among Jews, in order to be able to convince them of the truth of the Gospel.<sup>71</sup> The very process of writing down Scripture involved accommodation as well.<sup>72</sup> Thus equipped, Bekker set out to demolish each and every biblical story which might be taken to imply the existence of Satanic intervention. In particular his extremely confused attempt to downplay the devil's part in the story of the Fall would become notorious.<sup>73</sup> In fact, he had to admit that he could not make sense of the Fall.

Bekker's many Voetian critics had a field day. By far the most articulate representative of the conservative orthodoxy, was the minister Jacobus Koelman—a fervent millenarian, by the way—who in 1692 published two elaborate refutations of *The World Bewitched*, entitled simply *Refutation of B. Bekkers's The World Bewitched* and *The Poison of Cartesian Philosophy*. The latter volume contains an extremely detailed account of the several scandalous quarrels academic Cartesians had been involved with. Koelman discerned an international conspiracy against the reformed creed, and did not hesitate to call Machiavelli, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza and Bekker members of one big family of atheists. Van Velthuysen was also considered a member of this group, against whom Koelman seems to have held a very special grudge.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Koelman concentrated on the truly *atheistic* nature of Bekker's efforts. In 1685, however, Bekker had already made it quite clear that he felt very strongly about Spinoza's 'atheism'. In a book on recent church history he related how one day in The Hague he had actually met the philosopher. Although Spinoza in fact made a very decent impression on Bekker, the latter was in no doubt as to the threat Spinoza's monism posed to the entire Christian legacy.<sup>75</sup>

Koelman was not impressed. According to him, Bekker's concern for the dangers of Spinozism was entirely hypocritical.<sup>76</sup> To be more precise, like Spinoza, Bekker must have been an imposter, especially in his employment of the hermeneutical device of accommodation. As early as 1694, and as far away as Leipzig, the German theologian Ernst Kettner was to publish a *Tractatus* on this very question: *de duo impostoribus B. Bekker et B. de Spinoza*. One Petrus Hamer also

<sup>70</sup> Bekker, *De betoverde Weereld*, II, 54–55.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 90.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 146–147.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 110–118.

<sup>74</sup> Koelman, *Het Vergift van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie*, Preface and 649.

<sup>75</sup> Bekker, *Kort Begrip van de algemeine Kerkeleke Historien*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Koelman, *Het Vergift van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie*, 478 ff.

reminded his readers once more of Spinoza's skill for hiding his true 'mad sentiments' behind seemingly lofty language, by calling God eternal, infinite, omnipresent, all powerful and so on, while at the same time reducing Him to nature.<sup>77</sup> Koelman saw very well that Spinoza had rejected Cartesian dualism, and that although Spinoza was accused of many things, Cartesian dualism could not possibly be one of them. Both his books, published in 1692, contain, however, dozens of references pointing to agreement between Spinoza's and Bekker's use of the principle of accommodation.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, this conclusion was shared by a Remonstrant theologian such as Johannes Molinaeus (?–1702) as well as many more obscure critics.<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile, Bekker was supported by several 'Cartesians' who were even more radical than Bekker had ever been and whose sympathy for his cause only did further damage to his reputation. One of his most outspoken admirers was a young man by the name of Eric Walten (1663–1697), who on account of his extremely aggressive defence of Bekker was prosecuted for blasphemy and who died in jail in 1697 while awaiting trial.<sup>80</sup> Much in his biography is uncertain. He told his prosecutors that he was German, but his expertise as an English translator seems to indicate a British background. Apparently, he had friends in high places—King William himself actually tried to persuade his prosecutors to get on with the case instead of letting him rot in jail—but in 1685 he was banned from the city of Utrecht for vagabondage and begging. From 1688 onwards, he lived in The Hague, where he styled himself a Doctor in Theology, Philosophy, and Law, although he seems to have made a living as a physician, as well as through his writings and the medals he designed. Koelman was in no doubt as to the character of this 'atheistic blasphemer'<sup>81</sup> and one 'Iiritiel Leetsosoneus' repeatedly suggested that Walten was, in fact, a Spinozist.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Hamer, *Volstreckte Wederlegginge*, 411.

<sup>78</sup> Koelman, *Wederlegging van B. Bekker's Betoverde Wereld*, 129–136 and 388 ff and *Het Vergift van de Cartesiaensche Philosophie*, 478 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Molinaeus, *De Betoverde Wereld*, 15 ff and 64 ff. See also Leydekker, *De goddelykheid en waarheid der H. Schriften*, I, 197–214; II, 3–12, 67 ff and 191–222; Hamer, *Volstreckte Wederlegginge*, 411; Verryn, *Aenmerckingen op de Betoverde Wereld*, 23 and the two anonymous pamphlets entitled *Verscheide gedichten* and *Aanmerkingen van eenige rechtzinnige Broederen*.

<sup>80</sup> Knuttel, 'Ericus Walten'; Van Bunge, 'Eric Walten'.

<sup>81</sup> Koelman, *Schriftmatige Leere der Geesten*, 868, Cf. 876.

<sup>82</sup> Leetsosoneus, *Den Swadder*, 12 and 20–21. Then again, caution is due as far as this particular pamphlet is concerned, for its author, who was proud to call himself a Cartesian, also argued that Bekker was no Cartesian at all, and that neither for that

If nothing else, Walten was a prolific pamphleteer. In 1688, he took up the cause of William III against James II and showed himself to be a staunch defender of popular sovereignty and the elective nature of monarchy. Next, he turned to the question of the civil rights of government over the church, and to two local disputes, raging in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. He became only truly notorious, however, when he interfered with the Bekker affair. Within weeks of the publication of *De betoverde Weereld*, Bekker's colleagues had started a procedure to have this book banned. After this, Walten immediately took issue with Bekker's orthodox detractors, ridiculing their apparent incompetence in grasping Bekker's arguments. In three separate pamphlets he did his best to be as offensive as he could.<sup>83</sup> But his efforts made little difference, so he next tried to give the affair a political twist by publishing, in June 1692 an open letter to Bentinck, Earl of Portland, whom he warned of the Calvinist campaign to suppress the tolerant politics Walten was sure the King of England would not wish to see abolished.<sup>84</sup> To all intents and purposes, Walten only succeeded in aggravating the situation for Bekker, who in August 1692 was effectively deposed as minister. This in turn triggered Walten to publish his final pamphlet on the matter in which he cried out that the synods of the Dutch Reformed Church had turned into a lunatic asylum ('een *Sottenhuys*, of *Gasthuys van de Gekken*').<sup>85</sup> This went too far, or so it would seem, for in November 1693 a joint appeal was made by the deputies of the synods of North and South Holland to the Court of Holland to have Eric Walten prosecuted for blasphemy.

One of the more interesting aspects of Walten's interference concerns his political allegiance. Had he been born thirty years earlier, he would no doubt have felt perfectly at home with the Hobbesian republicanism, that was rampant among radical Cartesians such as Koerbagh, whose bitter fate he was about to share. In fact, Walten, in one of his pamphlets had announced the publication of 'a critique of Holy Writ (..) under the title a *Bloemhof der Leergierigen*', an obvious reference to Koerbagh. Indeed, his various comments on the authenticity of the Old Testament reveal an intimate acquaint-

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matter was Descartes. Descartes had remained a Catholic, and Catholics could not possibly be Cartesians. Neither could Mennonites, Socinians, Remonstrants, Atheists, and Libertines. Cartesians by necessity were members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

<sup>83</sup> [Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary; Vervolg Van de Aardige Duyvelary and Brief Aan een Regent der stad Amsterdam*.

<sup>84</sup> Walten, *Brief Aan sijn Excellentie*.

<sup>85</sup> [Walten] *Den Triumpheerenden Duyvel*, 16 ff.

tance with Spinoza's views on the matter.<sup>86</sup> His declaration that only recently, thanks to 'the light of a clear philosophy', had the study of the Bible started to make any progress, hints at approval of Meyer's *Philosophia Scripturae Interpretis*.<sup>87</sup> Under the Stadholderate of William III, however, the increasingly self-serving politics of the regents ruling Holland, no longer seem to have inspired the left wing of Dutch Cartesianism, as it had a generation earlier. In his pamphlets on the political scandals raging over Amsterdam and Rotterdam, he relished the opportunity to mock the corruption, which allegedly had come to rule these cities.

In one of his pamphlets in favour of Bekker, Walten actually managed to formulate something like an Art of Mocking: he felt compelled to mock his opponents, the case of the Voetians being so eminently ridiculous. He saw it as his duty to mock, for 'mockery itself is never wrong, it is only the matter that is being mocked which makes mockery good or bad.'<sup>88</sup> And on he went, for in his second pamphlet on the Bekker affair he argued at great length that the ministers who were making such a fuss over *De betoverde Weereld*, were lazy duffers who now felt threatened that the general public was able to judge for itself over the intricacies of the reformed creed. They would no doubt have preferred Bekker to publish in Latin, which would have given them the opportunity to plunder his work and dish up Bekker's findings in their sermons as the product of their own efforts. But Walten must have felt that, now that they had decided to go on pestering Bekker, the time had come to reveal what they really were, namely worshippers of the devil, Satanists. In fact, the attempt to dethrone God and to inaugurate Satan as supreme majesty, closely resembled the heinous efforts of the Jacobites.<sup>89</sup> It seems to have been this particular succession of insults, that in November 1693 led the Reformed authorities to request the Court of Holland to have Walten prosecuted. On March 19th, 1694 Walten was arrested in The Hague. For three years he waited in vain for his lawsuit to commence. After several desperate pleas from Walten to the judicial authorities to get on with his case, he died in his cell, possibly as a result of suicide.

<sup>86</sup> Walten, *Onwederlegglyk Bewijs*, 66. For his Spinozan comments, see also his *Den Triumpheerenden Duyvel*, 12 and *Brief Aan sijn Excellentie*, 62 and 80.

<sup>87</sup> [Walten] *Vervolg Van de Aardige Duyvelary*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> [Walten] *Aardige Duyvelary*, 24

<sup>89</sup> [Walten] *Vervolg van de Aardige Duyvelary*, 36ff and *Brief Aan sijn Excellentie*, *passim*.

Of course, Walten was an eccentric radical. But he was not the only supporter of Bekker to go beyond the message of *De betoverde Weereld*. Andrew Fix has pointed to the Amsterdam Collegiants, who during the 1690s also discussed Bekker's views. One Herman Bouman in particular, drew attention by his willingness to push Bekker's arguments much further than the Calvinist minister who had started the row. To the horror of several other Amsterdam Collegiants, Bouman suggested that angels, like the human soul might not be immaterial at all. In a series of pamphlets, one J. Pel simply rejected the very existence of angels and devils.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, Walten, Bouman and Pel were not even the most radical polemicists to raise their voice over Bekker's treatment by the reformed authorities. Johannes Duijkerius (1661/2–1702), a former proponent of the reformed church, whose life is shrouded by mystery, even went beyond Walten in that he came to embrace a strictly materialist 'Spinozism'. He published anonymously his two-part *Het leven van Philopater* (1691–1697). In the first part of this highly amusing *roman à clef* we follow the adventures of an impressionable theology student by the name of Philopater, who from a pious Voetian turns into a Cocceian, after which he, in the *Vervolg* of the life of Philopater reverts to Spinozism. Thus he is able to mock *all* reformed theologians. The only political element in Duijkerius' *Het leven van Philopater* concerns Spinoza's analysis of Moses' role in establishing the Hebrew theocracy, which it grossly misinterprets by delivering a deliberately farcical reading of *Exodus*—reducing the successful crossing of the Red Sea to Moses' maritime expertise.<sup>91</sup> Although Bekker must have been seriously embarrassed by a Spinozist supporter such as Duijkerius, the former's attack on belief in Satanic intervention, closely resembled Koerbagh's views on the supernatural. But whether Duijkerius still strove for reconciliation with 'true' Christianity in the manner Koerbagh did, very much remains to be seen. This much does seem clear, however, that in the eyes of many theologians, Spinozism had become an acute threat to the Dutch reformed orthodoxy.

We have come a long way from the scholarship of Lipsius and Grotius, the authority of Burgersdijk, the subtle metaphysics of Spinoza's *Ethics* and the political insights delivered in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. Even compared to the Van Velthuysens and the De la Courts of the Stadholderless age, Bekker's and certainly Walten's and Duijkerius' writings, may, from a philosophical perspective,

<sup>90</sup> Fix, 'Angels, Devils, and Evil Spirits' and *Fallen Angels*, 108–116.

<sup>91</sup> Duijkerius, *Het leven van Philopater*, 159–160.

look mainly eccentric. However, *De betoverde Weereld* was to become a *cause célèbre*. It was translated into German, French and English. In Germany in particular *Die bezauberte Welt* had quite an impact, infuriating the Lutheran orthodoxy just as much as it had angered the Voetians in the Republic. As a matter of fact, Winfried Schröder has pointed out that several German scholars of the time, were also extremely well-informed on Spinoza's Dutch following.<sup>92</sup> Only the most enlightened eighteenth-century Germans dared to speak in Bekker's favour, including Thomasius (1655–1728) and, of course, Lessing (1729–1781), who as a young man seriously contemplated composing a new translation. In France, Voltaire (1694–1778) payed homage to Bekker 'très bon homme, grand ennemi de l'enfer et du diable.'<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, anyone interested in the historical effects of philosophical discourse must be fascinated by the ferocity Cartesianism was still able to unleash, some fifty years after it first reached the Republic. Let us not forget that in the province of Holland, the actual prosecution of witches had stopped by the late sixteenth century. While the stakes were still burning in neighbouring Germany, in Holland Bekker's arguments concerned a practice that had long been abandoned.<sup>94</sup> In many respects, Bekker's intervention was only the latest effort in a vigorous Dutch tradition of scepticism with regards to the supernatural.<sup>95</sup> It was not sorcery which inspired so many scholars and hacks alike to issue their commentaries on *De betoverde Weereld*, it was Cartesianism. Here was a philosophy which continued to divide the Republic, and to cause its more outspoken supporters to loose their jobs, and in some cases their lives. What is more, Bekker and his supporters take us to the final issue that is to be addressed in this study, if only since it was reported by one of the witnesses interrogated over Eric Walten's 'blasphemous' behaviour, that the latter had been making inquiries in The Hague, so as to purchase a copy of the infamous *De tribus impostoribus*.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Schröder, "... *Spinozam tota armenta in Belgio sequi ducem*".

<sup>93</sup> Voltaire, *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, III, 69. See my introduction to Bekker, *Die bezauberte Welt* and my 'Du *Betoverde Weereld* au *Monde enchanté*'.

<sup>94</sup> De Waardt, *Toverij en samenleving*. See also Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'Hoofdlijnen en interpretaties van Nederlandse toverij en hekserij'.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example: Evers, 'Die Orakel von Anthonius van Dale'; De Waardt, 'Abraham Palingh'; Waite, 'Man is a Devil to Himself'.

<sup>96</sup> Van Bunge, 'Ericus Walten', 53–54.

### 3. *Radical Enlightenment*

Until recently, speculation was rife as to the provenance of the *Tractatus de tribus impostoribus* and its relation to the French text with a similar title, but entirely different contents, the *Traité des trois imposteurs*. Thanks to the immaculate scholarship of Winfried Schröder, we now know for a fact, that the oldest *De tribus impostoribus* still extant, in which Moses, Christ and Mohammed are identified as the three great imposters of humanity, only dates from 1688, and was to a large extent the outcome of a joke.<sup>97</sup> One Johann Joachim Müller (1661–1733), a lawyer from Hamburg composed the text for a disputation held at Kiel in 1688. He had been provoked to do so by being asked what he knew of this infamous hypothesis, which, of course, had a century-old reputation. In short, there is no reason to suppose that the text we now have at our disposal, represents more than a rather mediocre thought-experiment. It certainly holds no place in the history of Spinozism, either Dutch or German. Neither has any connection been established with the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, arguably the most notorious clandestine text of the time.

The original title of the *Traité des trois imposteurs* was *La Vie et l'Esprit de Mr. Benoit de Spinoza*. It was composed around 1700 and published anonymously in 1719 in The Hague. The second title can only be considered part of the history of Dutch Spinozism, however, once we are prepared to agree with Silvia Berti, that it was written by the Rotterdam lawyer Jan Vroesen (1672–1725).<sup>98</sup> Needless to say, the political message of the *Traité* was decidedly republican. And in view of the highly particular way in which Dutch republicans had turned to Hobbes during the 1660s in order to defend the sovereignty of the States, the fact that its author managed to combine so many quotations of Spinoza and Hobbes in itself seems to support the attribution of the *Traité* to a Dutch patrician such as Vroese. If Vroese was indeed the author of the *Traité*, which is generally supposed to have been written in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the Korerbagh-Duijkerius tradition in Dutch Spinozism apparently survived into the eighteenth century.

<sup>97</sup> Anonymus (Müller), *De imposturis religionum (De tribus impostoribus)*.

<sup>98</sup> *Trattato dei tre impostori*, ed. Berti. For the most recent statement of her claims and a large collection of reactions, see Berti *et al.* (eds.) *Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and Free-Thought*. See also Laursen, 'Impostors and Liars'. Berti's thesis has been most effectively criticized by Schröder, *Ursprünge des Atheismus*, 452–464.



The question as to the identity of the author of the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, seems particularly important against the background of what Margaret Jacob has called the early, *radical* Enlightenment, which found its resolution predominantly among the Huguenots of The Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. In her *The Radical Enlightenment* (1981), she first established the crucial role the Dutch Republic played in the emergence of an essentially ‘republican’ and largely ‘pantheist’ culture among disaffected Huguenots:

Before there was a High Enlightenment in Europe, during that violently anti-Christian post-1750 climate that briefly dominated the great salons of Paris and that is best represented in the writings of the Baron d’Holbach and his atheistic friends, there was a Radical Enlightenment. If it had a capital, it was The Hague and there, of course, it was directly in touch with the nerve center of the Enlightenment propaganda, the Dutch publishing houses.<sup>99</sup>

Crucial to her reconstruction of this particular phenomenon are the activities of the Knights of Jubilation, a masonic secret society first established by John Toland in 1710 in The Hague whose members seem to have been responsible for the publication of the *Traité des trois imposteurs*.<sup>100</sup>

For the moment, however, it remains to be seen how this radical Huguenot coterie is to be connected with the history of seventeenth-century Dutch Spinozism. For apart from the fact that it is still far from settled whom should be held responsible for the *Traité*, the account Jacob presents us with is the outcome of the lessons that were drawn by a small number of French Protestant refugees, from two essentially English Revolutions, namely the political upheavals of the Civil War and the so-called Scientific Revolution, who happened to live in Holland. Not a single member of the Knights of Jubilation seems to have been a Dutchman. It was only among the editors of the associated *Journal Littéraire* that we find Justus van Effen (1684–1735) and Willem Jacob’s Gravesande (1688–1742).<sup>101</sup> However, the precise connection between this journal and the Knights remains obscure and as Jacob herself repeatedly argues, the kind of Newtonianism propounded by the *Journal Littéraire* was theologically

<sup>99</sup> Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 119 and 144 ff. See also her *Living the Enlightenment*, 91–95. On the question of the allegedly masonic character of this society, see Berkvens-Stevelinck, ‘Les Chevaliers de la Jubilation’ and Jacob, ‘The Knights of Jubilation’.

<sup>101</sup> Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 182 ff. See Buijnsters, *Justus van Effen*, 90–94; Benítez, ‘La coterie hollandaise’; Laursen, ‘The Politics of a Publishing Event’.

anything but heterodox.<sup>102</sup> Since I am concerned here with assessing the fate of *Dutch* Spinozism, which as I have tried to show should be regarded as the outcome of very specific historical circumstances, the matter of the nationality of the Knights is not semantic.<sup>103</sup> What Margaret Jacob elsewhere has termed 'the early Enlightenment's direct relationship to political experience'<sup>104</sup> simply happened to be unique to the Dutch Republic and so eminently different from the monarchies surrounding it.

This is further illustrated by the nature of the publishing houses of the time that were involved in launching a unique series of radical texts, including the writings of Tindal (1657–1733), Toland (1670–1722), Collins (1676–1729), and of course, the *Traité* itself. Dutch booksellers of the time do not seem to have played a substantial part in this offensive, and the foreigners who were seem to have remained very foreign indeed. Take, for example, Thomas Johnson, who from 1713 to 1728 acted as the publisher of the *Journal Littéraire*, and who seems to have been closely associated with the production of the *La Vie et l'Esprit de Mr. Benoit de Spinoza*. He was a Scotsman, who from 1701 to 1728 sold books in The Hague and then in Rotterdam until his death in 1735. He was largely occupied with the distribution of English books on the Continent, and from 1710 onwards he published pirate editions of Shakespeare for the British market. In fact, he probably moved from The Hague to Rotterdam, because it was more conveniently situated to commerce with the British isles.<sup>105</sup>

In my view, by the early 1700s a crucially important distinguishing factor between the early Dutch Enlightenment, spearheaded by the remaining 'Spinozists', and Balthasar Bekker and his supporters on the one hand, and *les premières Lumières françaises* on the other, is the apparent Dutch lack of interest in the so-called *libertinage érudit*.<sup>106</sup> It is a well-established fact that the more radical texts of

<sup>102</sup> Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, 187. In *De Achttiende Eeuw* 18–2 (1986), devoted to the *Journal Littéraire*, two articles in particular stress the mitigated nature of this journal: Otten, 'Het tolerantievraagstuk in het *Journal Littéraire*' and Bots en De Vet, 'De fysico-theologie in het *Journal Littéraire*'.

<sup>103</sup> Jean Le Clerc might have disagreed. In the preface to the second edition of his anonymous *Sentimens de quelques théologiens de Hollande* Le Clerc, apparently referring to himself, notes 'on peut être de Hollande, sans y être né & sans être dans l'Eglise Réformée.'

<sup>104</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 15.

<sup>105</sup> Kossmann, *De boekhandel te 's-Gravenhage*, 206–210; Lankhorst, 'De uitgevers van het *Journal Littéraire*'; Feather, 'English Books in the Netherlands in the Eighteenth Century'. See also Ford, *Shakespeare 1700–1740*, 45–56.

<sup>106</sup> On the 'Libertinage' in general, see Pintard, *Le Libertinage érudit*; Spink, *French*

the so-called 'littérature clandestine', of which the *Traité des trois imposteurs* is such a spectacular example, combined a roughly materialist reading of Spinoza with a deep-rooted religious scepticism, that went back to such late sixteenth-century authors as Montaigne (1533–1592), Vanini (1584–1619) and Charron (1541–1603).<sup>107</sup> At the moment, however, we still know very little about the Dutch reception of seventeenth-century Parisian 'libertins' such as La Mothe le Vayer (1588–1672), Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653) and Guy Patin (1601–1672). Their work was being printed in the Netherlands, and Grotius, but also latter-day Dutch humanists, including Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) and Nicholaas Heinsius (1620–1681), were personally acquainted with Naudé and Patin.<sup>108</sup> Yet Wijnand Mijnhardt was probably right in stressing the increasing uneasiness in Dutch public opinion about the contribution of French Protestants to Dutch culture, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The sudden presence, in particular in the major towns of Holland of thousands of refugees, importing a culture that on many points differed sharply from the Dutch, naturally gave rise to wide-spread Franco-phobia.<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand, it has long been customary among Dutch historians to regard Spinoza—and Koerbagh—as unique 'cases'. Their rationalism was perceived as being mainly eccentric, excessive and, consequently, historically not very relevant. They were generally supposed not to represent anything besides their own, personal particularity.<sup>110</sup> However, apart from Balling, Jelles, Bredenburg, Van Leenhof and Van Hattem, and Meyer, Koerbagh, and Duijkerius, Van Balen and Cuffeler, many other late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Dutch admirers of Spinoza have now been identified. In view of the drastic measures taken against Koerbagh, Walten, and, of course Spinoza himself, it cannot come as a great

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*Free-Thought*; Adam, *Les Libertins au XVIIe siècle*, Gregory, *Etica e religione nella critica libertina*; Bianchi, *Tradizione libertina e critica storica*; Charles-Daubert, *Les Libertins érudits en France*.

<sup>107</sup> Bloch, 'L'héritage libertin dans le matérialisme des Lumières'; Bianchi, 'Alle fonte della ragione'; Charles-Daubert, 'Les principales sources de *L'Esprit de Spinoza*'; Assoun, 'Spinoza, les libertins français et la politique'.

<sup>108</sup> See Pintard, *Le Libérinage érudit*, 94–95, 103–104, 307–309, 324 and 339ff. See also Pintard, *La Mothe le Vayer, Gassendi, Guy Patin*, 69–86; Blok, *Nicolaas Heinsius in dienst van Christina van Zweden*, 112 and 171 ff; *Contributions to the History of Isaac Vossius' Library*, 22–24 and *Isaac Vossius en zijn kring*; Bots, *Correspondance de Jacques Dupuy et de Nicolaas Heinsius*; Katz, 'Isaac Vossius and the English Biblical Critics'.

<sup>109</sup> Mijnhardt, 'Dutch Culture in the Age of William and Mary'.

<sup>110</sup> See Mijnhardt, 'The Dutch Enlightenment', 204.

surprise that many of them must have been very hesitant to leave any traces in print.<sup>111</sup> What is more, once we regard Spinozism as the product of the first Stadholderless age, it no longer appears that eccentric at all, although both Dutch Cartesianism and Spinozism, after the reinstatement of the Stadholderate, quickly lost their political overtones. By the time Bredenburg and Bekker came to the fore, the permanent strife between 'Oranje' and 'Loevestein' had lost much of its former urgency, not least since William III turned out to favour a rather tolerant politics himself. Moreover, the increasingly nepotistic oligarchy of the regents ruling the major Dutch towns, no longer inspired the kind of principled republicanism which had been so popular under De Witt. By taking the initiative in the attack on Spinoza and his following, the moderate mainstream of Dutch Cartesianism by and large seems to have managed to forestall the Voetian argument that Cartesianism was somehow responsible for Spinoza's atheism. By upholding the largely strategical alliance with Cocceianism, it would continue to present a theologically acceptable alternative to Voetianism. At a professional level, it should be added, the daring hermeneutical and exegetical efforts of Van Velthuysen, Meyer, Koerbagh and Spinoza, were largely ignored by the specialists in the field.

The association with Spinozism was to remain extremely dangerous, as Bekker himself was to experience, when his many critics tried to associate his 'Cartesian' hermeneutics with Spinoza's. In this final public debate on the merits of Cartesianism, political philosophy was no longer an issue. Neither could Cartesianism by this time still be presented as an exciting new philosophy. The hopes of an earlier generation of Dutch Cartesians to replace doubt by evidence, probability by certainty, and, most importantly, discord by unity, had failed to materialize. If anything, Cartesianism had added to the divisions within the Dutch Republic.<sup>112</sup> The Spinozists of the early Dutch Enlightenment were left out in the cold, or so it would seem. Just a few years prior to William III's elevation to the Stadholderate, De la Court had cried out:

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<sup>111</sup> A substantial number of Dutchmen associated at the time with Spinozism, but now completely forgotten because they failed to leave traces in print can be found in: Vermij, 'Le spinozisme en Hollande'; Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's Ethica fom Manuscript to Print*, 35–63; Wielema, *Ketters en Verlichters*, esp. Chapter 2. The relevant literature on many minor Dutch Spinozists of the time can be found in my 'Les origines et la signification de la Traducion française'.

<sup>112</sup> Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap*, 89–96.

that this Republic of Holland and West-Friesland, being deprived of their Free Government by erecting a Stadholder or Captain-General for Life, would in a few Years lose both the Name and Appearance of a Free Republick, and be changed into a downright Monarchical Government.

This, according to De la Court would no doubt cause many ‘Manufacturers, Fishermen, Merchants, owners of Ships, and others depending on them’ to flee the country.<sup>113</sup> It goes without saying that nothing of the sort actually happened.

Significantly, as E.H. Kossmann has observed: ‘In the eighteenth century the passage from a stadholderian to a non-stadholderian regime in 1702 and out again in 1747 was surprisingly smooth. It is as if the Dutch elites had come to accept this sort of change as a natural element in their constitutional history and no longer worried much about its significance.’<sup>114</sup> It is as if the Dutch simply came to recognize that the dispute over who should hold the sovereignty over the Republic was indeed left unresolved—and they left it at that.<sup>115</sup> Thus, the logic which produced the polarization of the 1660s no longer evoked the kind of radicalism epitomized by the Amsterdam ‘circle’ of Spinoza. And as Peter van Rooden has argued, by the last two decades of the seventeenth century, the ambition to formulate a single, ‘philosophical’ creed, which might serve as a universal basis for the practice of toleration, also grew increasingly out of date. In the future, dissent became institutionalized.<sup>116</sup> By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Spinoza’s highly individualistic *credo* which did not aim to define individual believers as members of any particular confessional group, was already becoming rather old-fashioned. Local governments were starting to develop a policy which would confirm this trend by promoting that the care for the poor should be taken over by the different local churches. This seems to have played a major role in the constitution of separate social identities of the competing confessions.

The early reception of Spinoza’s *Tractatus* appears to confirm a similar ossification, for one of the reasons that Spinoza failed to make a more substantial impact in the Republic may well have been the simple fact that there was too much to gain from attacking his

<sup>113</sup> De Witt [=De la Court], *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick*, 486.

<sup>114</sup> Kossmann, ‘The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century’, 24. See also Velema, ‘God, de deugd en de oude constitutie’.

<sup>115</sup> See also De Bruin, ‘De soevereiniteit in de Republiek’.

<sup>116</sup> Van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes*, 23 ff. See also Spaans, *Armenzorg in Friesland*.

views. The Republic's policy of mitigated tolerance had resulted in a unique and amazing number of competing schools of thought, each of which could take advantage of condemning Spinoza. Voetians could point once more to the dangers inherent in Cartesianism and to the horrors which resulted from the tolerant policies in which atrocities like Spinozism could arise. Cartesians could at last rub shoulders with a genuine atheist against whom they could play out Descartes' proofs for the existence of a transcendent God and an immaterial and eternal soul. Remonstrants, such as Batelier could use their Arminian objections against Calvinist 'fatalism' and the denial of an indifferent human will.

In short, once we regard Spinozism as a historical phenomenon, that is as a set of views propagated by people of flesh and blood who wanted to affect the way their contemporaries understood the world they lived in, it seems incumbent to regard it first and foremost as a product of the first Stadholderless period, and once this particular era had come to an end, Spinoza's philosophy to the majority of his countrymen must have presented itself as a series of answers to questions that were no longer as pressing as they once might have been. By the early eighteenth century, it should be added, the *scientific* status of both Cartesianism and Spinozism had also started to crumble. In view of the acute decline of the practice of mathematics, sketched in chapter Two, the rhetorical appeal of both Descartes' *mathesis universalis* and Spinoza's *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata* by this time seems to have diminished considerably. During the final quarter of the seventeenth century, the Leiden professor Burchard de Volder on the one hand remained loyal to Cartesian metaphysics, but on the other developed an experimental natural philosophy that had very little to do with the designs of the French philosopher. During his career, De Volder grew more and more sceptical as regards the viability of a truly mathematical science of physics.<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, Spinoza's scorn for the 'argument of design', most poignantly formulated in the appendix to the first book of the *Ethics*, was fundamentally at odds with a deep felt belief, inspiring the huge majority of early modern scientists working in the Netherlands, that God's providential wisdom *was* to be admired in 'the book of nature'. To all intents and purposes the seventeenth-century fascination with the infinite variety of nature, has to be understood as the expression of the age-old conviction that God has supplied man with *two* books

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<sup>117</sup> Wiesenfeldt, *Leerer Raum in Minervas Haus*, 84–89 and 210–216.

from which His Greatness can be recognized.<sup>118</sup> According to Peter Harrison:

the way in which the things of nature were ordered and disposed came to represent a logical premise from which God's wisdom and providence could be inferred. Of equal importance was the emergence of the conviction that God's purposes in the creation could only be realised when the functions of those things originally designed for human use were discovered. Interpreting the book of the creatures became a matter of discerning the intention of its author. In much the same way as the true meaning of a written text came to be identified with the designs of the writer, so legitimate meanings of the book of nature were sought in the purposes from which God had designed its living contents.<sup>119</sup>

When Boerhaave (1668–1738) in 1737–1738 edited the collected works of Swammerdam, he gave it a fitting title: *Bybel der Natuure*. For the book of nature to Swammerdam was a 'Bible of natural divinity in which God's invisibility becomes visible'.<sup>120</sup> No animal was too small to confirm God's providential reign: 'Herewith I offer you the Omnipotent Finger of God in the anatomy of a louse', he famously wrote in one of his letters: 'wherein you will find miracles heaped on miracles and will see the the wisdom of God clearly manifested in a minute point.'<sup>121</sup> Swammerdam may have been an extreme example. His obsession with establishing a religious basis for his research bordered on the hysterical. In 1675 he devoted at least half of a 400-page study of the may-fly to religious meditations on the similarities between the brief life of this lowly creature and the dejected state of mankind after the Fall.<sup>122</sup> But on the whole historians of science, who quite recently have re-discovered the relevance of early modern natural history, seem to agree in regarding this obses-

<sup>118</sup> Van Berkel, 'Citaten uit het boek der natuur'; Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic*, 57–60. See also Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, 321–327.

<sup>119</sup> Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, 168–169.

<sup>120</sup> Bots, *Tussen Descartes en Darwin*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Swammerdam, *Letters to Melchisedec Thévenot*, 105. However, quite apart from the fact that Swammerdam was such an extraordinary character that it is difficult to see how he can be taken to represent more common trends in the first place, it just so happens that in 1678 he purchased a copy of Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* for a French friend: *ibid.*, 98 and 118. What is more, Swammerdam and Spinoza had several mutual friends and acquaintances, and the two may well have met. Finally, it should, I feel, be kept in mind that in a sense Spinozism seems perfectly able to absorb much of Swammerdam's delight in detail. See esp. TTP, Chapter 6 and *Ethics*, V, 24: 'The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God.'

<sup>122</sup> Swammerdam, *Ephemeris vita*.

sion with detail as the product of the genuinely humanist wish to be *edified*.<sup>123</sup>

Despite the many factors at work that would help to explain the disappearance of Spinozism after 1672, it actually continued to attract considerable attention. If anything, this seems to be confirmed by the writings of the protagonists of the so-called 'moderate' early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic. It seems only natural to wonder against whom in particular Nieuwentijt (1654–1718) and Van Effen were writing. Were they merely concerned to stem a foreign tide of radicalism? Rienk Vermij has argued that Nieuwentijt's *Het Regt gebruik* (1715) was directed against real 'Spinozists' whom he must have known personally. Vermij's discovery of an anonymous translation, dating from 1710 of Toland's *Letter to Serena* (1704) only confirms the continuity of a radical Dutch streak within the early Enlightenment.<sup>124</sup> Piet Buijnsters, in his biography of Van Effen, is slightly more circumspect, but commenting on Van Effen's publication, in 1726, of a new edition of *Le Misanthrope*, that contained a 140 page-long essay on 'le Caractère des Esprits-Forts & des Incredules', even Buijnsters admits how much Van Effen cared about these matters.<sup>125</sup> Who are these 'esprits forts'? 'En un mot, ce sont ceux dont les uns forcent leur Raison à entrer dans les chimères d'Epicure, & dont les autres s'abiment dans les obscurités impénétrables de Spinoza.'<sup>126</sup> It should also be noted that Buijnsters is of the opinion that if only

<sup>123</sup> Pamela H. Smith, in a brilliant paper on Sylvius' cabinet and art collection put it thus: 'Humanist histories concerned themselves with the collection of the particulars of human experience — *exempla* — in order to teach prudence and offer moral edification. This collection should be quite active — for example, the recovery and recording of inscriptions or the searching out of places named by classical writers. This sort of investigation formed the model for the study of nature — natural history — in which nature was observed, natural exempla were collected, and various means of experiencing nature (including experiment) were pursued. It was these practices, rather than commitment to any particular theory, that constituted the most widespread manifestation of the new philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' Smith, 'Science and Taste', 442. See also Ashworth jr., 'Natural History and the Emblematic Worldview'; Cook, 'The Cutting Edge of a Revolution?'; Findlen, *Possessing Nature*; Jardine *et al* (eds.) *Cultures of Natural History*; Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*. Jorink, *Wetenschap en wereldbeeld*, 76–91. The same author will shortly publish his eagerly anticipated dissertation, entitled *Het boek der natuur. Veranderende opvattingen over de wonderen van Gods schepping in de Republiek (circa 1575–1715)*.

<sup>124</sup> Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap*, 73–75 en 86–88. See also his 'Bernard Nieuwentijt en de physico-theologie' and 'Tolands eerste brief aan Serena'.

<sup>125</sup> Buijnsters, *Justus van Effen*, 214.

<sup>126</sup> [Van Effen] *Le Misanthrope*, I, 268–407, 268.



'a tenth' were true of what Margaret Jacob 'feels to have discovered (...) it would mean an earthquake for our image of the European Enlightenment.'<sup>127</sup>

The prevailing image of the Dutch Enlightenment has a highly curious history, which has been succinctly summarized by Wyger Velema, who in 1993 observed that 'in the course of two decades, Dutch historiography has moved from the bizarre conclusion that nobody was enlightened to the equally startling conclusion that almost everybody was.'<sup>128</sup> The Dutch Republic, or so the story goes, was not 'enlightened' in any foreign, read: French way, but highly enlightened in all kinds of moderate variants of its own making. Once we take seriously, however, the idea of an *early* Dutch Enlightenment—which actually started around 1650, when Cartesianism hit the academic culture of the Netherlands and when the Republic embarked on its first Stadholderless age—, the conclusion seems inescapable that that same Republic harboured a 'circle' of philosophers and freethinkers who were just as radical in their assessment of revealed religion as some of the most daring *philosophes*. At the same time, however, their views point well beyond the *siècle des Lumières* in that they did not reject religion as such.

At this stage, it may be helpful to return to the absence of any Dutch 'libertinage'. Although Koerbagh, Spinoza and Duijkerius could be just as sardonic as the Parisian 'libertinage'—read Koerbagh on 'Triniteyt'—, an *Ars nihil credendi* could not possibly have been produced by either of them. For the protagonists of the radical Dutch Enlightenment of the seventeenth century were no epistemological sceptics. They were highly sceptical about the historical reality of Scripture and about the moral authority of ministers, but they did not doubt man's ability to find out the truth about the universe at large.<sup>129</sup> To put it differently, they were no post-humanists, but post-Cartesians. In fact, Spinoza cared little about erudition and regarded Cartesian doubt as a pathological manoeuvre. Man does have an adequate idea of God, or so we are told in the *Ethics* (II, proposition 47). Spinoza's Dutch followers agreed. The only Dutchman I know who was a 'Spinozist' and a 'libertine erudite' was Adriaan Beverland (1650–1716), the author of the lurid *De Peccato Originali* (1678).

<sup>127</sup> Buijnsters, *Justus van Effen*, 93.

<sup>128</sup> Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism*, 2.

<sup>129</sup> See Popkin, 'The Role of Scepticism in Modern Philosophy Reconsidered'; Spink, "'Pyrrhonien" et "sceptique" synonymes de "matérialiste"'; Benítez, 'La doute comme méthode'.

Here we have the *rara avis* of a Dutch scholar quoting Spinoza and Vanini. However, his friendship with Isaac Vossius and Nicolaas Heinsius, but also with Gronovius (1611–1671) and Graevius (1632–1703) cannot disguise the fact that he *was* a truly exceptional ‘case’.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, Françoise Charles-Daubert has pointed to what she calls the many ‘zones de convergence’ between the libertine tradition and the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*: the analysis of the origins of superstition by fear, the opposition to the proof for the existence of God from the ‘consensus gentium’, the critique of anthropomorphist theology, the separation of philosophy and theology, and the emphasis on the political function of religion.<sup>131</sup> But to mention just one, arguably crucial counter-example, Spinoza expressly stated that Moses was no imposter, and there is no evidence whatsoever that Spinoza ever read Charron and his French admirers.<sup>132</sup> As far as the personal contacts between Spinoza and French libertines are concerned, Bayle’s comments in the *Dictionnaire*, where he relates how after the publication of the *Tractatus* ‘Les esprits forts accouraient à lui de toutes parts’, seem to hit the mark. We know for certain that Spinoza was visited by Saint-Évremond (1616–1703), but the only time he himself took the initiative, it ended in disappointment. In 1673 he travelled from The Hague to Utrecht, on a diplomatic mission to the prince de Condé, who turned out to be absent from the headquarters of the French army. The story, also told by Bayle—*Dictionnaire*, art. *Spinoza*, remarque Z—that Spinoza had visited Paris only in order to flee before he was locked up in the Bastille, is nothing but a piece of fantastic gossip.<sup>133</sup>

According to the Swiss officer Jean-Baptiste Stoupepe (c.1620–1692), the author of *La Religion des Hollandois* (1673) the Republic counted many ‘libertins’, but he did not take the trouble to identify

<sup>130</sup> See Dingwall, *Very Peculiar People*, 155–177; Meyer, ‘Brieven uit de studentenkerker’; Elias, ‘Het spinozistisch erotisme van Adriaan Beverland’; De Smet, *Hadrianus Beverlandus*.

<sup>131</sup> Charles-Daubert, *Les Libertins érudits en France*, 100.

<sup>132</sup> Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, 291; *Opera*, III, 239. On the historical background of Moses’ ‘imposture’, see Schwarzbach and A.W. Fairbairn, ‘History and Structure of our *Traité des trois imposteurs*’; Berti, ‘Unmasking the Truth’. For example in the preface to the TTP, Spinoza must simply have used the same classical sources which were popular among the ‘libertinage’. See Akkerman, ‘Spinoza’s tekort aan woorden’ and ‘Mots techniques-mots classiques’; Proietti, ‘*Adulescens luxu perditus*’.

<sup>133</sup> See Cohen, ‘Le séjour de Saint-Évremond en Hollande’; Assoun, ‘Spinoza, les libertins français et la politique’; Popkin, ‘The First Published Reaction to Spinoza’s *Tractatus*’; Nadler, *Spinoza*, 314–318.

them. What is more, his characterisation of these scoundrels looks very French indeed. In fact, Stoupe felt that the Dutch were not a religious nation to begin with. In his view it was precisely their deep-rooted 'indifference' which had made them so vulnerable once the French armies invaded their country.<sup>134</sup> More recent commentators on the Dutch 'libertinism' are not very helpful either, since they seem to follow Calvin's use of the term to portray the opponents of sixteenth-century confessionalisation.<sup>135</sup> In this fashion Coornhert and Grotius have been called 'libertijnen'. Coornhert rejected the notion outright. Even a deeply religious politician such as Coenraad van Beuningen (1622–1693) has been characterised as a 'staatsman en libertijn'.<sup>136</sup> It goes without saying that this has little if anything to do with 'libertinage'. Indifferent let alone polemical attitudes towards Christianity cannot be found in the writings of Coornhert and Grotius. Probably the seeming lack of interest in religion of Christiaan Huygens, Franciscus van den Enden and Isaac Vossius are more akin to the French tradition. The Machiavellian analysis of religion as supplied in the *Politike Discoursen* of the De La Courts also looks more 'French' than the insights of Coornhert.<sup>137</sup>

In this context, Isaac Vossius was such a particularly disturbing scholar in that he played a major part in the philological unrav-

<sup>134</sup> Stoupe, *La Religion des Hollandois*, 87 ff.

<sup>135</sup> See Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, 14–15, 68 ff. Kaplan even minimizes the humanist background of these 'libertines', who to his mind were 'spiritualists'.

<sup>136</sup> Van Gelder, 'Humanisten en libertijnen'; Roldanus, *Coenraad van Beuningen*.

<sup>137</sup> On Christiaan Huygens, see Busson, *La Religion des classiques*, 116–120 and 328–329. On Franciscus vanden Enden: 'Quant à la religion, il n'en avait proprement aucune. Il ne croyait ni à des peines ni à des récompenses après cette vie, quoique d'ailleurs il reconnût un maître souverain de l'univers. On démêlait sans peine ses véritables opinions sur cette matière dans les conversations particulières; mais en public et parmi les personnes avec qui il n'était pas familier, il gardait toujours de grandes mesures. Il était catholique avec les catholiques et protestant avec les protestants', Du Cause de Nazelle, *Mémoires du temps de Louis XIV*, 101. Cf. 116. On Isaac Vossius: 'Dans le même tems qu'il faisoit des livres pour prouver que la Version du Septante étoit divinement inspirée, il témoignoit par ses entretiens particuliers qu'il ne croyoit point de révélation. La manière peu édifiante dont il est mort [20 février 1688] ne nous permet de douter qu'il ne fût dans ce sentiment impie. Quelques soins, quelques précautions que l'on prit, on ne put jamais l'engager à reconnoître en général les vérités de la religion chrétienne. Il s'obstina à garder là-dessus un profond silence', Des Maizeaux, in the preface to his edition of Saint-Évremond, *Oeuvres*. Charles II is reported to have remarked on Vossius that he was prepared to believe anything, as long as it was not in the Bible. See Katz, 'Isaac Vossius and the English Biblical Critics', 142. Unfortunately, the brilliant biography recently published by Blok: *Isaac Vossius en zijn kring* stops well before Vossius' death. On his alleged libertinism and atheism, see 434–444.

elling of Scripture.<sup>138</sup> Whereas Spinoza's reading of the Old Testament served an ultimately philosophical purpose, several seventeenth-century humanists had observed strictly technical flaws in the received reconstruction of biblical chronology. In 1593, Leiden had succeeded in attracting the greatest living scholar of the day, Joseph Scaliger, successor to Lipsius. Although he held a privileged research position and did not lecture, it was Scaliger who trained Daniel Heinsius and Grotius. His main claim to fame rested on his linguistic expertise in ancient cultures, biblical, European, Asian and American. The second edition of his *De emendatione temporum* (1593) was widely held to be an authoritative History of the World since its creation, which, according to the Leiden scholar, who knew not only French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but also German, Italian, Arabic, Armean, Syrian, Persian, Turkish, some Ethiopian and Gothic, and even Dutch, had taken place on Sunday, 25th October 3950 B.C.<sup>139</sup> His calculations regarding the subsequent dates of the Fall, the Flood and Babel served as the cornerstones for a universal chronology, which, however, would become the target of two major assaults, both published in the Republic.

First and most famously, Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676) issued in 1655 in Amsterdam his *Prae-Adamitae*, arguing not only that Moses could not possibly have composed the entire Pentateuch, since in *Deuteronomy* he could not have described his own death, but more importantly put the simple question where Cain's wife had originated.<sup>140</sup> The extent to which La Peyrère's views troubled the scholarly community is evident from the fact that Grotius felt it necessary to refute them, many years before they appeared in print.<sup>141</sup> Now La Peyrère was very much an amateur, who neither read Greek nor Hebrew, but Isaac Vossius was not. And it was he who in 1659 issued *De vera aetate mundi*, an extremely well-informed attack on Scaliger's account of the age of the world, to which Vossius added nearly 1500 years. While this new chronology created the opportunity to rebut La Peyrère's phantasies regarding the ancestry of Cain's wife, Vossius went out of his way to discredit the accuracy of the Old Testament as it had been handed down by the Hebrews, which, of course was

<sup>138</sup> I owe much of the following to Eric Jorink.

<sup>139</sup> See Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, II. *passim*; 'Scaliger's Chronology: Philology, Astronomy, World History', 104–144 and *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*, Chapter 5.

<sup>140</sup> See Popkin, *Isaac la Peyrère*.

<sup>141</sup> Popkin, 'The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory'; Schmidt, 'Space, Time, Travel'.

widely perceived as an assault on the integrity of the Word of God as such.<sup>142</sup> Neither La Peyrère nor Vossius provided anything like a comprehensive philosophy in the way Spinoza did, but the threat the latter's analysis of the historical status of Scripture posed, only gained by their example. To the considerable dismay of the Dutch clergy, both the *Prae-Adamitae* and *De vera aetate mundi* were translated into Dutch.

For a long time it was felt that Bernard Nieuwentijt, directly facing the challenge of Spinozism in his *Regt gebruik der Wereltbeschouwingen* (1715) and his *Gronden van Zekerheid* (1720), had more or less managed to bury the last remnants of Spinozism to be found in the Dutch Republic.<sup>143</sup> There can be little doubt that Nieuwentijt was deeply disturbed about the rise of unbelief in the early eighteenth century. It is also clear that in Nieuwentijt's eyes, the spreading of Spinozism was to be held responsible for this sorry state of affairs. For a long time, Nieuwentijt's fears were not taken very seriously by most historians. The recent work done on the early Dutch reception of Spinoza's philosophy, including Margaret Jacob's and Silvia Berti's studies on the radical Enlightenment, have definitely changed this for ever. Something pretty threatening must have been out there, *despite* the many factors opposing the spreading of Spinozism, such as the polemical offensive unleashed by the Cartesian faction, the gradual relaxation of the political tension between 'Oranje' and 'Loevestein', the swift decline of the rhetorical appeal of the *mos geometricus*, and the continuing popularity of the argument from design. Yet it may take us quite some time to define precisely what this surviving radicalism amounted to, how Dutch it actually was and how much of it survived the 1720s when Newtonianism came to replace Cartesianism as the modern natural philosophy. In a sense, the most remarkable fact about the Dutch Republic as a centre of the radical—Francophone—Enlightenment, rediscovered by Jacob and Berti, is its very existence during a period in the cultural history of the Netherlands which from a political, a scientific and a theological perspective had become such an unlikely candidate to serve as such.

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<sup>142</sup> Lebram, 'Ein Streit um die hebräische Bibel und die Septuaginta'. See also Vossius' *De Septuaginta interpretibus*.

<sup>143</sup> Bots, *Tussen Descartes en Darwin*; Vermij, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap*; Petry, 'Nieuwentijt's Criticism of Spinoza'.

## EPILOGUE

### THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT OF DUTCH CARTESIANISM AND SPINOZISM

Around the middle of the seventeenth century, at a time when the Dutch Republic blossomed into a golden age, it witnessed a philosophical revolution. The newly established Aristotelian tradition which for several decades had dominated the philosophical curricula at the universities, was largely replaced by a generation of 'new' philosophers, who were mainly inspired by the writings of Descartes. The French philosopher was by no means the first critic of Aristotle, but in the Netherlands he certainly was the most successful. Dutch 'Cartesians', however, were anything but loyal disciples and Descartes had every reason to be concerned about the kind of following he was gathering in the Netherlands. Yet his thoughts would have a unique impact on Dutch philosophy. Nowhere in Europe, not even in France, would he acquire the kind of status he was to hold in the Republic, where Cartesianism was to become much more than just another alternative to the *philosophia recepta*.

Of course, in France Descartes' prestige was also considerable.<sup>1</sup> However, at the universities and the propedeutic 'collèges de plein exercice' Aristotle's authority was not really questioned during the seventeenth century. Moreover, only professors of natural philosophy showed interest. Only during the first half of the eighteenth century would Cartesianism be considered a feasible alternative to the *corpus Aristotelicum*. Significantly, in Paris it would be the revolution in astronomy which first challenged Peripateticism. Yet during the 1680s, while at Leiden natural philosophers were already abandoning Cartesianism in favour of a more experimental approach to nature, Parisian professors of natural philosophy launched a concerted effort to find Aristotelian solutions for such newly discovered phenomena as the formation and desintegration of heaven-

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<sup>1</sup> See in general the still impressive Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, I, 429ff and II, *passim* and the recent survey in Schobinger (Hrsg.) *Grundriss ... Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts. Band 2: Frankreich und Niederlande*, I, 398ff and II, *passim*.

ly bodies.<sup>2</sup> By that time, however, the Académie des sciences had been dominated for quite some time by Cartesians such as Huygens and Rohault (1617–1672).<sup>3</sup> What is more, the literary success enjoyed by Fontenelle (1657–1757), had introduced this new philosophy into the Parisian salons. Meanwhile, Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715)—inspired by Schuyt’s edition of *De homine*—had developed a highly original variant of Cartesianism, which would become extremely influential in France. Finally, it should be added that Descartes could count on the protection of friends in high places in France just as he could in the Republic. In 1647, the Duc de Luynes personally translated the *Meditationes*, and the prince de Condé and the Duc de Rohan, two of the most powerful men in the country, were widely known to be admirers of Cartesianism. As far as the academies were concerned, the ‘Oratoires’ were by far the most receptive to this new philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Malebranche too was an ‘Oratorien’. One of the schools of this secular congregation, was in Saumur, which also housed an important Protestant university, where during the 1610s Franco Burgersdijk had held a chair. At this Huguenot academy Cartesianism was already favoured during the 1660s by Jean-Robert Chouet (1640–1715), who would go on to introduce it at the academy of Geneva.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, he broadly followed the example set by Wittichius’ separatism, turning natural philosophy into a largely autonomous discipline, not unlike Heereboord and De Raey had done at Leiden.<sup>6</sup>

In many ways, German Cartesianism was largely an export product from the Republic. In view of the numbers of German students who enrolled at Dutch universities in general, and at Leiden in particular, this can come as no surprise. As the *Encyclopédie* would have it, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Leiden was ‘the first academy of Europe’.<sup>7</sup> Between 1640 and 1669 an average of twenty percent of the Leiden body of students was of German origin. Comparable percentages have been established for the universities of Franeker, Groningen and Harderwijk. Almost twenty percent of all

<sup>2</sup> Brockliss, ‘Philosophy Teaching in France’; ‘Aristotle, Descartes and the New Science’ and *French Higher Education*.

<sup>3</sup> Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution*. See also Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses*.

<sup>4</sup> Girbal, *Bernard Lamy*, 14 ff; Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et augustinisme*, 81–121.

<sup>5</sup> Prost, *La Philosophie à l’Académie protestante de Saumur*; Heyd, *Between Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment*. See also Stauffer, *L’Affaire d’Huisseau*.

<sup>6</sup> Heyd, *Between Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment*, 81–86.

<sup>7</sup> Grafton, ‘Civic Humanism and Scientific Scholarship’, 59.

academic degrees bestowed in Leiden between 1625 and 1675 were to Germans. During the seventeenth century, Leiden attracted more German students than many German universities. It goes without saying that they originated mostly from the Protestant Northern and Eastern parts of Germany.<sup>8</sup> The most important German Cartesian, the Duisburg professor Johannes Clauberg was also trained in the Republic.<sup>9</sup> In Catholic Louvain, Cartesianism also started to spread during the 1660s. By the end of the decade most professors of natural philosophy were converted.<sup>10</sup> Again, astronomy served as the principal battle-ground, and again, natural philosophy would quickly grow into an essentially autonomous discipline. Whereas Dutch Cartesians do not seem to have had much influence on the turn of affairs in Flanders,<sup>11</sup> they were instrumental in Descartes' Scandinavian breakthrough. During the 1660s Swedish physicians in particular, many of whom had been trained at Leiden, embarked on a series of violent conflicts with their Ramist-Aristotelian colleagues from the local faculties of theology.<sup>12</sup>

The English 'Great Instauration' is a story of its own. In England the 'new' philosophy of the seventeenth century was predominantly Baconian in character.<sup>13</sup> At the universities Aristotle would continue to set the agenda, especially at Oxford, although Descartes and in particular Gassendi were being read widely outside the classroom.<sup>14</sup> Among Cambridge-scholars there seems to have been a greater appreciation of Cartesianism, but this interest was shortlived. During the 1640s Henri More (1614–1687) in particular was impressed, but he soon changed his mind, fearing the materialist consequences of

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<sup>8</sup> Schneppen, *Niederländische Universitäten und deutsches geistesleben* and 'Niederländische Universitäten und deutsches Geistesleben'; Frijhoff, *La Société néerlandaise et ses gradués*, 379–380; De Ridder-Symoens, 'Buitenlandse studenten aan de Franeker universiteit'.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Balz, 'Clauberg and the Development of Occasionalism'; Weier, *Die Stellung des Johannes Clauberg in der Philosophie*; 'Cartesianischer Aristotelismus' and 'Der Okkasionalismus des Johannes Clauberg'; Trevisani, *Descartes in Germania*; Pätzold, 'Johannes Clauberg'; Von Roden, *Die Universität Duisburg*, 159–163 and 197–198.

<sup>10</sup> Vanpaemel, *Echo's van een wetenschappelijke revolutie*, 43–48.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>12</sup> Lindborg, *Decartes i Uppsala*; Battail, 'Essai sur le cartésianisme suédois'.

<sup>13</sup> Pacchi, *Descartes in Inghilterra*; Rogers, 'Descartes and the English'. The literature on the early days of the Royal Society has become enormous. See Van den Daele, 'Die soziale Konstruktion der Wissenschaft'; Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England*; *Establishing the New Science* and *Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy*.

<sup>14</sup> Feingold, 'The Humanities' and 'The Mathematical Sciences and New Philosophies', esp. 389–404.



Cartesian dualism. His 'Cambridge Platonism' is generally perceived as a conscious effort to fight off the materialism and the mechanicism of Hobbes and Descartes.<sup>15</sup> Although More and his friends were on excellent terms with several Dutch Arminians, there is no evidence whatsoever that points to a similar revival of Platonism in the Dutch Republic.<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, apart from the aesthetic Platonism propounded at Leiden by the young Daniel Heinsius during the early 1600s, the literary Platonism of Hooft, and the Socratic elements pervading the sixteenth-century revival of Stoicism, Plato appears conspicuously absent from seventeenth-century Dutch philosophy.

In comparison to Britain, no Baconian revolution took place in the Republic either. At least no genuine movement identifying with experimental science emerged.<sup>17</sup> In Britain this movement took root during the middle of the century and manifested itself in all kinds of initiatives, resulting finally, in 1662, in the Royal Society, no equivalent of which was established in the Netherlands. In stark contrast to the English situation, in the Republic the universities became the main centre from which the 'new' philosophy spread. Although this held many advantages, mainly from the point of view of propaganda, it also tended to isolate the teachers of philosophy from its practitioners. During the seventeenth century, only faculties of medicine were equipped to do empirical research, but apart from the fact that the experiments performed by medical professors were mainly designed to illustrate their lectures, they were concerned with details which could not be expected to steer the direction natural philosophy was to pursue. No doubt, the highly decentralised organisation of the Republic made it particularly difficult to set up a Dutch national research institute comparable to the Royal Society.

Meanwhile, at the Dutch universities natural philosophers and medics had managed to establish a large degree of autonomy with respect to the professors of theology. Once they had gone their own way, however, it became very difficult indeed to recognize anything 'philosophical' in their work. In effect, this meant that philosophy as an academic discipline gradually started to lose its very heart. Both in an Aristotelian and in a Cartesian context, natural philosophy constituted the core of the philosophical enterprise. Yet the emancipation of the natural sciences did not enhance a secular view of the world in any way. The presumption that nature reveals God's

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<sup>15</sup> Gabbey, '*Philosophia cartesiana triumphata*'. See also Hutton (ed.) *Henry More*.

<sup>16</sup> Colie, *Light and Enlightenment*.

<sup>17</sup> Van Berkel, 'From Simon Stevin to Robert Boyle'.

providence would continue to dominate the hearts and minds of Dutch physicists and naturalists alike. Accordingly, no conflict arose between Nature and Grace, Reason and Revelation. Spinoza's metaphysical radicalisation of Cartesianism was quickly neutralised. At no stage in the history of the Dutch Republic did it acquire the kind of 'normal' status once enjoyed by the philosophy of Descartes. Despite the revolutionary pathos of Dutch Cartesianism, it soon established itself as a new orthodoxy, with its proponents acutely aware of the need to fight off rationalist 'extremists' such as Meyer, Koerbagh, Spinoza and Balthasar Bekker. At the same time, however, academic Cartesians in particular found it difficult to remain in touch with the empirical research that was undertaken outside academe. In short, only one generation after Cartesianism had largely managed to destroy the Peripatetic domination of academic philosophy, it found itself in the way of a further rejuvenation of the practice of philosophy.

Over the last few decades, it has become abundantly clear that the European reception of Spinozism was far more intense than had previously been recognized. Here, only a cursory glance can be supplied. First, the interest in Spinoza among the Dutch Refuge should be mentioned. In 1678, Gabriel de Saint-Glen (c.1620–1684) produced a translation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>18</sup> The following year Jean-Marie Lucas (1636/46–1697) published his *La Vie de Spinoza*<sup>19</sup> and in 1685 Jean Le Clerc's (1657–1736) *Sentimens de quelques théologiens de Hollande* was issued.<sup>20</sup> In France, Fontenelle (1657–1757), who traditionally is associated primarily with Van Dale's *De oraculis*, also wrote several treatises—the *Traité de la liberté*, the *Essai sur l'origine des fables* and the *Histoire des Ajoiens*—showing traces of his study of Spinoza.<sup>21</sup> But many other, minor figures have to be mentioned here as well, including the Deventer professor Simon Tyssot de Patot (1655–1738),<sup>22</sup> the atheist priest Jean Meslier (1664–1729),<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Francès, 'Un gazetier français en Hollande'.

<sup>19</sup> This text appeared only in 1719, due to the efforts of Des Maizeaux. See Armagor, *Pierre Des Maizeaux*, 111–113.

<sup>20</sup> Pitassi, *Entre croire et savoir*, 11 ff. See also Whelan, *The Anatomy of Superstition*, 164 ff.

<sup>21</sup> [Fontenelle] *Traité de la liberté*; Fontenelle, *Histoire des Ajoiens*. See also Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*, Chapter 1; Dagen, 'Fontenelle et Spinoza'; Bots, 'Fontenelle et la Hollande'.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Tyssot de Patot, *Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé*.

<sup>23</sup> Meslier, *Oeuvres complètes*. See Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 367–370; Desné (éd.) *Le Curé Meslier*; Mori, 'L'ateismo "malebranchiano" di Meslier'.

the Normandy count Boulainviller (1658–1722),<sup>24</sup> the Marquises d'Argens (1704–1771)<sup>25</sup> and Vauvenargues (1715–1747),<sup>26</sup> and the journalist André-François Deslandes (1689–1757).<sup>27</sup>

And then there are the so-called 'clandestine manuscripts', such as the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, the *Parité de la vie et de la mort*, *La religion analysée*, Nicolas Fréret's (1688–1749) *Lettre de Thrasybule à Leucippe*, and Yves de Vallone's (1666–1705) *La religion du chrétien*. Du Marsais' (1676–1756) *Examen de la religion*, including the last part of this text, entitled *De la conduite* also bear the traces of Spinoza's philosophy.<sup>28</sup> As early as 1938, Ira O. Wade pointed to Spinoza as being 'the greatest single influence' on the entire genre of clandestine manuscripts.<sup>29</sup> Since these texts have only recently become available in reliable texts, it has only now become possible to assess Wade's judgement. Clearly, Fréret, Du Vallone and Du Marsais were not Spinozists. Many other seventeenth-century sources are evident in their work, and the way in which Spinoza's writings were interpreted among the more radical early Enlightenment activists leaves much to be desired. All the French texts mentioned above, date from the first quarter of the eighteenth century. They are mainly polemical tracts, directed against Christian theology. Once the more radical wing of the French Enlightenment began to model its efforts on the empirical sciences, especially figures such as LaMettrie (1709–1751), Diderot (1713–1784) and d'Holbach (1723–1789) still regarded Spinoza's metaphysics as a major source of inspiration, even though 'Spinozism' in the course of the eighteenth century was increasingly identified with 'Materialism'.<sup>30</sup> By the time Frans Hemsterhuis

<sup>24</sup> Simon, *À la recherche d'un homme et d'un auteur*; Benítez, 'Un spinozisme suspect'; 'Spinoza ou Descartes?' and 'L'attribution à Boulainvilliers de quelques traités clandestins'; Sheridan, 'Aux origines de l'*Essai de métaphysique*'.

<sup>25</sup> McKenna, 'Le marquis d'Argens et les manuscrits clandestins'.

<sup>26</sup> Bove, 'La politique et l'histoire: le spinozisme de Vauvenargues'.

<sup>27</sup> Maccary, *Masque et Lumières au XVIIIe siècle*.

<sup>28</sup> For two recent overviews, see Schröder, 'Spinoza im Untergrund' and McKenna, 'Spinoza in Clandestine Manuscripts'. Of some of these texts editions are now available: *De la conduite qu'un honnête homme doit garder pendant sa vie*, éd. McKenna; *Trattato dei tre impostori*, ed. Berti; *Parité de la vie et de la mort*, éd. Bloch; Du Marsais, *Examen de la religion*, éd. Mori; Fréret, *Lettre de Thrasybule à Leucippe*, éd. Landucci. On the author of *La religion du chrétien*, one of the earliest (1703–1705) and largest clandestine manuscripts, see O'Higgins, *Yves de Vallone* and more in particular: Benítez, 'Du bon usage du *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'. For a brilliant survey of the most important clandestine manuscripts and the present state of research, see: Schröder, *Ursprünge des Atheismus*, 395–526.

<sup>29</sup> Wade, *The Clandestine Organisation and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas*, 269.

<sup>30</sup> Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française* is still the point of departure. See al-

(1721–1790) started to publish on what he took ‘Spinozism’ to be, it became very difficult indeed to recognize anything really ‘Spinozan’ about it.<sup>31</sup>

By this time, however, even in England *franc-tireurs* such as Charles Blount (1654–1693) and John Toland (1670–1722) were showing their admiration,<sup>32</sup> just as Tschirnhaus (1651–1708) and free-thinkers such as Stosch (1648–1704), Lau (1670–1740) and Wachter (1673–1757) were in Germany, where the anonymous *Symbolum Sapientiae* was also starting to be circulated.<sup>33</sup> Only recently has the extent to which the young Leibniz was fascinated by the *Tractatus*, despite his own repeated claims to the contrary, been established.<sup>34</sup> Finally, major proponents of the German Enlightenment such as Edelmann (1698–1767)<sup>35</sup> and Lessing (1729–1781) should be mentioned in this respect. As is well known, the latter’s confession to Jacobi (1743–1819) that he had been a covert Spinozist throughout his adult life, triggered the so-called *Pantheismusstreit* of the 1780s.<sup>36</sup>

The plethora of names and titles cited above, is not intended to convey the impression that eighteenth-century philosophy was

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so the contributions by Comte-Sponville, Moutraux and Burbage and Couchan in: Bloch (éd.) *Spinoza au XVIIIe siècle*, Métraux, ‘Über Denis Diderot physiologisch interpretierten Spinoza’; Moreau, ‘Rezeption und Transformation des Spinozismus’. See also Verbeek, *Le Traité de l’Ame de La Mettrie*, II, *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> Verbeek, ‘Sensation et matière.’

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, esp. 205–234; Iofrida, ‘Matérialisme et hétérogénéité’; Lurbe, ‘Matière, nature, mouvement’ and ‘Le spinozisme de Toland’; Berman, ‘Disclaimers as Offence Mechanisms’; Brown, ‘“Theological Politics” and the Reception of Spinoza’; Vermij, ‘Matter and Motion’; Simonutti, ‘Spinoza and the English Thinkers’. Champion, the author of *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* and ‘Publiés mais non imprimés’ has started a separate series of editions, entitled *British Deism and Free-Thought*.

<sup>33</sup> The main authority is Schröder, co-editor of *Cymbalum mundi sive Symbolum sapientiae*, ed. Canziani *et al.*, author of *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* and ‘Das “Symbolum Sapientiae”/“Cymbalum mundi” und der “Tractatus theologico-politicus”’ and editor of, for example, Stosch, *Concordia rationis et fidei* and Wachter, *Origines juris naturalis*. See also Wurtz, ‘Un disciple “hérétique” de Spinoza’; Otto, *Studien zur Spinozarezeption in Deutschland*, 75–119; Mulsow, ‘Freethinking in Early-Eighteenth-Century Germany’; Shelford, ‘Worse than the Three Impostors?’. Mulsow has announced a book entitled *Clandestine Erudition and Early Enlightenment in Germany*. See also his elaborate reviews of Lau, *Meditationes philosophicae de Deo, Mundi, Homine*, Hrsg. Pott and Reimann, *Historia universalis atheismi falso et merito suspectorum*, Hrsg. Schröder, in: *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 18 (1994), 94–102.

<sup>34</sup> Goldenbaum, ‘Die Commentatiuncula de iudicē’.

<sup>35</sup> Otto, ‘Johann Christian Edelmann’s Criticism of the Bible’.

<sup>36</sup> See Scholz (Hrsg.) *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*; Zac, *Spinoza en Allemagne*; Tavoillot, *Le Crépuscule des Lumières*; Pätzold, *Spinoza, Aufklärung, Idealismus*.

packed with Spinozists. On the contrary, philosophers loyal to Spinoza's heritage are hard to find during the High Enlightenment. What has become abundantly clear, however, is that throughout Europe at least parts of his writings were continuously studied and commented upon after his death. Because of the many eighteenth-century misunderstandings concerning Spinoza's philosophical intentions, Winfried Schröder has argued that both the early German and the radical French reception of Spinozism have little to do with the actual views of Spinoza, and that, consequently, the Dutch philosopher cannot be considered to have been a significant early Enlightenment thinker.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, interpretative accuracy seems a questionable criterion once it comes to assessing any author's historical significance. As Paul Vernière put it several decades ago, 'l'influence réelle d'une doctrine et la fermentation intellectuelle qu'elle provoque ne dépendent pas de sa rigidité dogmatique, mais très souvent de sa désintégration.'<sup>38</sup> This is not to deny that the differences between Spinoza and his first Dutch followers on the one hand and his European, especially his French admirers on the other were significant. In their enthusiasm for Spinoza's rationalism, French 'Spinozists' chose to ignore what the Dutch philosopher had written in favour of religion and on the exemplary character of the Old Testament. These differences seriously complicate our perspective on the continuity of Dutch Spinozism, but should not lead us to deny its reality during the early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic. I should like to conclude, that they also help us to understand why the metaphysics, which during the early eighteenth century first inspired French materialists, by the end of the century was embraced by Goethe as an alternative to d'Holbachs *Système de la Nature* (1770). But this, of course, is another story altogether.

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example Schröder, *Spinoza in der deutschen Frühaufklärung* and 'Spinoza im Untergrund'.

<sup>38</sup> Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 700. For a recent interpretation of the European reception of Spinozism, see Walther, 'Spinozissimus ille Spinoza.'

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